DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 251 838 CS 208 685

AUTHOR Rossi, Lillian
TITLE Process: Vision and Re-Vision. Writing Teachers at Work.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Berkeley. School of Education.
SPONS AGENCY Carnegie Corp. of New York, N.Y.; National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 87p.; Prepared through National Writing Project. For a related document, see CS 208 683.
AVAILABLE FROM Publications Department, Bay Area Writing Project, 5635 Tolman Hall, School of Education, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720. Request "Publications for Teachers" for ordering information.
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Group Experience; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Learning Experience; *Peer Teaching; *Personal Narratives; Self Expression; Teacher Effectiveness; Writing Exercises; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes; Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS *Journal Writing; National Writing Project; New York (New York); Theory Practice Relationship; Writing Projects

ABSTRACT

This book records activities of a New York City Writing Project seminar and the writing of some of the 35 students in it. The account reflects how the students wrestled with different points of view, learning how to respond in writing groups and discovering themselves as writers in their process journals. Among the appendixes is a guide for developing a vocabulary of response steps for members of a writing group. (HOD)

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Writing Teachers at Work

# Process: Vision and Re-Vision

by Lillian Rossi

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Series editor: Gerald Camp

Cover design: Guy Joy

Typesetting: Janet Kodish

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## Acknowledgments

There's always the fear you might leave someone out, but where do you stop when so much and so many seem to influence and help you? It's hard to measure such things but important to try. So I'd like to thank in no special order:

The New York City Writing Project, headed by Sondra Perl and Richard Sterling, which has nurtured and encouraged the writing of countless teachers and students in the New York area.

The time before we were even a project. The mornings, afternoons and evenings on Riverside Drive and Brooklyn Heights when we met and wrote and shared lessons.

The people who shared ideas with me in groups about groups, specifically Toby Bird, Diane Burkhardt, Jim Fairclough, Johanna Mosca, Ed Osterman, Sondra Perl, Bob Whitney and Marcie Wolfe, who helped shape my ideas on listening, revising, commenting and responding to student work.

Sondra Perl, who thought I had a story, encouraged me to write it, and edited my first draft. Marilyn Wiener, who listened to my prewriting and writing anxiety as we drove to and from Writing Project meetings.

Marilyn and Bob Baratto who listened to a first and second draft. Mina Rothman who typed, and typed and typed.

Stanley Barhan, editor of *Soundings* and publisher of Cross Cultural Communications, an alternative literary arts publisher focusing on the traditionally neglected languages and cultures, for permission to use Jill Eisenstadt's poem.

Gerald Camp who did the final editing and who understood my process and gave me time to revise and rewrite.

My dad and first writing teacher who read the first draft and said, "not bad, write more."

My mom who was always there.

But mostly thirty-five student writers who took a chance on an elective course and by word of mouth encouraged three hundred and eighty-five other student writers to take the course in the years following. I learned more from them than I taught.

*Labor is blossoming or dancing where*
*The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,*
*Nor beauty born out of its own despair,*
*Nor blear-eyed widsom out of midnight oil.*
*O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,*
*Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?*
*O body swayed in music, O brightening glance,*
*How can we know the dancer from the dance?*

—William Butler Yeats
*Among School Children*

# Preface

"You should see the writing my kids are producing. It's amazing."

"My chairman came in today and I told him he'd have to write with us."

"Other teachers keep asking me, 'What are you doing in that process class? The kids are talking about it all over the school.'"

These are familiar statements to writing project teachers. We have all heard them following summer institutes and inservice courses. As a director of the New York City Writing Project, I have been hearing teachers talk like this since 1978. Each year, the stories have a common theme: students are writing with more facility and producing better papers, teachers are becoming more confident and experiencing more pleasure when they teach writing, colleagues and administrators are becoming increasingly curious.

When I first heard about the National Writing Project Writing Teachers at Work series, I wondered which of the many stories I had heard would be worth publishing. Lillian Rossi's was on the top of my list. Why? Because following the summer institute in 1978, she asked herself, "Given what I now know about the writing process and myself as a writer, how can I best teach writing?" And she answered this question not by incorporating a few isolated techniques into her teaching but by creating an entire writing course modelled on the summer institute, a course based on a thorough knowledge of the writing process.

Readers will find here a high school writing course that resembles what we do in the New York City Writing Project. You will see students wrestling with different points of view, learning how to respond in writing groups, and discovering themselves as writers in their process journals. You will see Lillian writing with the students and sharing her writing with them. As you read the students' writing, you will hear, as the

class did, the development of voice. You will see that the students' development parallels teachers' development in a summer institute. In fact, Lillian's monograph underscores the idea that writing can be taught and learned, simply and elegantly, without gimmicks, when students and teachers embark on a discovery of the writing process.

Sondra Perl, *Director,*
*New York City Writing Project*
*Herbert H. Lehman College*
*City University of New York*
*Bronx, New York*

# Contents

Preface ..... v

Introduction ..... 1

Process: Vision and Re-Vision ..... 6

Appendix A
A Water Color ..... 71

Appendix B
Developing a Vocabulary of Response
Steps for Members of a Writing Group ..... 74

Resources ..... 76

# Introduction

I hardly ever read the bulletin board at school, yet somehow in the Spring of 1978 I saw the flyer for the New York City Writing Project. The offer of six free graduate credits and a chance to write and learn about teaching writing enticed me. Secretly I thought of myself as a writer. Of course I hadn't ever finished a short story, but I had a suitcase filled with starts. I submitted an application, a description of an effective technique I use in my writing classes, and a letter of recommendation from my chairman. Later, I was delighted when the directors, Sondra Perl, Richard Sterling, and John Bereton accepted me, and I immediately began thinking about an issue that I would be willing to write about for one month over the summer.

On July 5, I began the daily two-hour trip to Lehman College in the Bronx where the New York City Writing Project is located. I had certain expectations for the first meeting of class. To begin with, I thought the directors would give us an outline for the course. I envisioned the class being broken down into those who wished to write and those who were interested in teaching writing. Midway in the seminar, I assumed, there would be an integration of the two. Looking back, I realize I was measuring this course before it even began with my own dismal high school and college courses where the professor was always in charge. This course was different from the beginning. There was no outline of the course. There was no separation of writers and teachers of writing. Instead the directors walked in, handed out blue notebooks, and said we were going to write on "what I believe about the teaching of writing." The directors provided pens, pencils, and paper if we needed them. While we wrote, the directors wrote. After we put the papers we had written in envelopes and sealed them, we were asked to open our blue notebooks, which were called *Process Journals*, and describe how we had just written our papers on the teaching of writing. We were asked to focus on what we had done while writing, how we had gotten our ideas, what had allowed us to write fluently or what had gotten in our way, or anything else we had noticed about our writing process.

After we finished writing in our journals, the two directors in charge of this summer's institute, Sondra and John, asked us to read

aloud from our journals. Some people eagerly volunteered to read. I wondered what these journals were for. I couldn't imagine keeping such a journal for a month. This course didn't seem like other English or education courses.

The major writing for the course was to consist of a three part point-of-view assignment. I was uncertain what this meant until someone mentioned the Japanese story *Rashomon.* As a way to introduce us to the ways of re-seeing a story, we were asked to re-write "Babylon Revisited" by F. Scott Fitzgerald from the point of view of a character in the story. We were told we could also change the mode or the time sequence. I found it interesting to write as if I were a character in the story. I even learned about the story. After we finished re-writing the story, we were asked to record our process in our process journals. Later, as we read about our process to the whole class, I was amazed at all the ways the story could be re-told. After lunch we met in smaller groups to share our actual pieces on "Babylon Revisited." I liked the idea of the smaller groups although I wasn't sure what I could learn from other participants. Also, I was apprehensive about reading my piece to seeming strangers. As each of us read, I noticed how gentle we were, talking about each other's pieces. This beginning in a small group taught me about the vulnerability a writer has in sharing. Without a lecture, without reading a textbook, I was learning about teaching writing. I was learning from the other participants. I was learning by being a writer.

On Monday we were ready to begin what was called our "first point of view." We had been asked to think about an experience that had affected us. We were given no barriers. I began this assignment in class knowing my topic, but no words seemed to be coming. It was hard for me to write, and the obvious fact that everyone around me was writing was frustrating. I was writing about a death in my family. My cousin, who had been like a sister to me while I was growing up, died of cancer when she was twenty-seven. Her death, seven years before, brought me in contact with the fragility of life. I couldn't write in class, so I left the room to buy a new pen and some coffee. When I returned I still couldn't write. The next day my group was going to meet, so I sat at my own kitchen table that night trying to write. I found myself looking at a plant that was overflowing its pot and falling into the sink. The plant seemed to be triggering some memory, but I couldn't seem to fit the images into the concept of my story. Finally I wrote something, but the image of the plant haunted me. The next morning (in class) I began writing a description of the plant. When I read the disjointed pieces to my group, they asked me to tell them more about the plant. I found myself talking about the plants in my mother's kitchen and my own plants. I didn't see what this had to do with my story, but my group

urged me to explore the metaphor. "Write about it. There's something that you won't know about until you begin to write it all out." I listened to their advice. I really did want to see what this was all about. When I finished writing and re-read my story, I realized that the story was about my cousin's death, but it was also about expressing and articulating love (see Appendix A).

I was pleased by the story but couldn't imagine writing it from a second point of view. The writing was again difficult. The same process of trips for coffee, but now graph paper to write on instead of new pens became my morning ritual while others were writing. As I walked to the store, I could actually hear my story. Getting the story from my head to paper was a struggle, one I recorded in my process journal. I didn't know what to do, but my group suggested I should start anywhere. A group member suggested an image from the first piece might help me move to the second. She asked me if there was anything that I wanted to explore in the first piece.

I thought about the flickering candles I had mentioned. The group asked me to explain why they were important. I thought and as I answered I realized that what I had to say about the candles really dealt with the outer trappings of religion. The second point of view became the observations of a young woman during a religious funeral service. I was curious to see that my starting point in this piece was actually my ending, and that somehow I could only write the beginning after I had written the end. What seems so clearly to me now to be the complexities of the writing process was then nameless.

Creating a third point of view seemed impossible. In three days I produced two sentences. I wrote nothing about this third point of view in my process journal. I was disgusted. I cut class on a Monday and went to see friends who lived near the beach. I found I couldn't stop talking about the class, my writing, and what was happening. That afternoon as I sat in their back yard, I noticed their cat. It was about four o'clock and the light seemed to give the cat and the atmosphere a shimmering effect. It was a beautiful image. When I got home to my own apartment, I looked out the back window and saw the sun going down. All of a sudden I felt as if I could write a poem. The first three stanzas of it seemed to deal with my first and second points of view. The last stanza is as follows:

I am thinking of Monday
A cat arched her back
Ready to pounce.
There was a haze
The light was leaving the sky

My camera was far away
My canvas at home
There is only the mind
to record
this cat
this light.
Memory is such pale smoke.

I was amazed. The last line seemed to put everything into perspective. In my first two points of view, I had been writing about my cousin's death. Through the writing process I explored so many feelings and perceptions. Seeing the topic from three points of view enabled me to discover the complexities and bonds within a family structure.

I had come a long way for a person who didn't seem to have anything to write about. The group had helped me to focus by listening to me. The writing I had done had taught me more about writing than I had ever learned in writing courses. Also, for once, I was writing what I wanted to write. I wondered, if I had been a student in my own class, how would I have fared? As a teacher I was a good listener, but how often did I suggest how a student should progress with a piece? This summer I had learned that a reader or a listener had to allow the writer to see where he or she wanted to go with a piece. My group had encouraged that. Although as a teacher I always wrote when my students did, I never shared how difficult writing was for me. Sondra and John shared their process entries regularly. I thought about what I had learned. My process is slow. It wants to be perfect, but it can't be. It wants to be neat, but it isn't. It's resistant, but if I accept that and just write, I can make all kinds of discoveries. The most powerful part of my process is that it conjures up what is surprising. I re-read my process journal. Part of entry fourteen is as follows:

> Is it "normal" to be thinking about conversations in terms of fitting them into your story? Is talking to yourself via interior monologue part of process? Are there similar processes for all? Do they differ drastically? How did it begin for you? Every time you run this course, do you go through the same bombardment and then synthesis? Does it work for the high school student?

This last sentence intrigued me. I thought, does the old way work for the high school student? The answer was not a simple yes or no. Yet the summer institute was powerful. All of the things I intrinsically knew about learning had happened in this course. I wanted my students to feel what I had felt.

In September, I went back ready to change the world of writing in

my school, but no one seemed to want it changed so quickly. Our summer writing project group was meeting monthly, sharing ideas for lessons on writing for ourselves and our colleagues. Then, as our project grew, we began to do workshops for other teachers. I saw that the change in my school would only come about gradually and not via the administration but in the classroom. I began sharing writing lessons with colleagues. I worked with another department writing up journal assignments in their content area. Then I outlined my ideas for a junior and senior writing process class and submitted them to the principal and chairman. One year later, in September, I had a process class.

The following pages record *parts* of that class and the writing of some of the thirty-five students in it. Reading my students' work, I was moved. In the final analysis, it is those words and the writing of them which made our class.

*The movement of certain limbs, the appearance of certain tracings on a piece of paper signal that writing is happening. But the process of which those outward appearances are only the final outcome takes place internally and invisibly.*

—Bill Bernhardt
*Just Writing*

**DAY ONE**

Sandwiched between my four other classes (three speech, one advanced British literature class) and my job as union representative for 184 teachers, paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, and secretaries was my process class. We met at 11:05 in a room that we soon realized would be too small. The month was September, the year 1979, and the course an elective entitled Process: Vision and Re-Vision. There were thirty-five students on register. I had spent the summer in Sicily with the family of a friend, and the New York Indian Summer was comfortable. My students, too, seemed fresh after their summers, and I remember thinking as I looked at them how eager they all were in the beginning of a class. A good many of them were anxious to know what *process* was. Their anxiety took all forms from "What do you have to do to pass this class?" or "My guidance counselor said she didn't know what it was about, but you'd probably pass me," to finally "What is this process stuff?"

I remembered my own anxiety last summer at not being told what process was and my elation when it came to me through my own writing one week before the course was over. I knew if I had been given that answer right away, the power of discovery from my own writing would have been muted. I thought of that summer seminar in planning this first day. Sondra and John had created a climate that encouraged writing. I wanted to do this, too. I felt that my tone, even where I sat in the room, could be crucial in encouraging a community of student writers to flourish.

I purposely sat toward the side of the room, yet all eyes were focused on me. I began by answering their questions and then saying that since this was a writing class, we would write. By writing, I meant keeping a separate journal on our writing which would be called a Process Journal. Also, we would write three points of view on one topic and

finally two other pieces of writing. Simply completing that work would give a student an 85 in the course. The quantity and quality of the work would decide if the student would be graded higher, but only the lack of quantity would dictate a lower grade. As for the question of what process is, I told them it had been my question a year ago. If they could simply trust me for a while the difference between the process involved in writing and the actual product might become apparent. I also gave them the option of dropping the class. They could let me know by the next class session. I then asked them to take out paper and pens. After groans of "This is the first day of class and you want us to write?" and the usual borrowing of paper and pens, they seemed ready. The topic was *Writing - How? - Why? - When? - and Where?* The time limit was twenty minutes and all paper, even scrap, would be collected. I clutched my own pen and began to write. "Are you going to write too?" someone asked. I simply said yes.

The model would have to be set up this way. Telling them writing was a top priority in the class and then not doing it would have been hypocritical. At first, I was conscious of their writing, but soon I was only aware of the sound of my own pen scratching against the paper. My words were coming easily, and for a time I even forgot where I was, until Mary, who was keeping time, yelled "stop." There was a sound of relief as pens and pencils stopped, and they seemed ready to pass in their papers. I asked them to take a few minutes to try to recall how they had written their pieces. I questioned whether they wrote straight through the time limit or if they had to stop and read their work as they wrote. Also, I asked them if there were any disturbances or feelings that inhibited their writing. In other words, I wanted them to jot down what they understood about how they wrote. They balked at more writing, but they did it. Again, there was silence, but the bell rang after a short time and the papers were passed to the front. I was still on the side of the room, but the students were used to a teacher who sat in front of them.

* * *

**HOW I FEEL ABOUT WRITING**

*I love to write. I love to write right. The only thing is that I write left. That is, I am a lefty. So that poses a writing problem, or say, that poses problems writing prose.*

*I am now hunched over the desk, with the paper held at a clumsy seventy degree angle. My elbow hurts from having it scrape on the edge of the desk.*

*I am a minority, known as a south paw (left handed person). Paranoids are also a minority.....*

*The room is too hot. The traffic can be heard. It is comforting, the noise. I cannot write without something to distract my attention. Otherwise I become involved with my work and forget what I was writing. It's this condition I have, it seems I can't do only one thing at a time. So even while I'm writing now, I am thinking many thoughts: lizards, whistles, dragons, comitatus, and computers are dancing around in my head. The thoughts are always moving through my head. When one stops, and is brought to my attention, poof! within seconds it is written down on my paper.*

*Moving on to other things. The room is hot, I don't like heat. I also hate the cold. I hate spinach and broccili. My shoes are too tight.*

—Peter Corless

Writing is only an enjoyable experience when I am not facing any type of deadline for completion of a project. Whenever I am assigned a writing project in school, I procrastinate until the very last minute. The pressure [redacted] created by a deadline transforms something I would otherwise enjoy into a harried period of total involvement. Despite the totally consuming effort required in order to complete a project on time, I feel a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment after I have completed it.

There aren't very many physical factors which affect my ability to write. Whenever I am working on [redacted] a project that involves a great deal of writing, I usually lock myself away in my bedroom. In order to get comfortable, I sprawl out on my bed surrounded by all of the books which I might have a use for. [redacted] I can't write well if there are any

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outside distractions or loud noises. This includes music, the television, and yelling. I must be able to totally absorb myself in the project which I am working on. If I can do this, I am able to produce my best results in the shortest amount of time.

PROCESS

No, I was RELAXED while I wrote this
Yes, I was Nervous under Pressures of Grading
I Re-read and examined
No re-writing done but analyzed for construction of paragraph(s)
Conditions were fine for writing
Bruce was minor spelling distraction
I was comfortable but tired

John Seufert

I love to write; I release all that's inside me when I do. Sometimes an idea pops into my mind while I'm just walking down the street and I get really mad if I don't have paper to write it down so I can remember it.

I like to write at home, because school can be so distracting. I'm pretty observant and noises sometimes break my train of thought - like right now I can hear a teacher across the hall giving an assignment; I can also hear the girl next to me sliding her arm across the desk as she writes. Usually at home I write on my bed leaning on a magazine, although it occasionally like the feel of my desk under my pen as I write. My kitchen table is also a great place to write because I get alot of ideas listening to the familiar sounds of home.

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I'm pretty particular when I write - even now I keep checking each paragraph to make sure I spelled everything right and fixed all my grammatical errors. I like to rewrite everything at home because I have a horrible habit of crossing out and sticking words in here and there and generally making a mess.

I'm very glad you're collecting this because I enjoy people reading my work - I like to share my writing. But I only like to share it with people I trust. I trust you - you seem really nice and first impressions count alot with me.

Writing has always been a pleasure for me - I feel like I'm communicating with the whole world - I want to please people and make them laugh or cry or be serious. I guess I'm pretty egotistical 'cause I like to have all attention on me through my writing.

I could keep writing forever on how much I like to write, but this paper must end sometime.

Donna Bair

Personally, I find writing to be very relaxing. If I'm in the mood I can write forever. Although writing is relaxing to me, there are times when I just can't put two words together. This is very annoying, when a report, or essay is due. This writers block is usually caused, when I have things on my mind.



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Usually I prefer writing in silence, though, at times I write with a music playing. It's interesting to note, that the type of music you are listening to, directly effects the style, and rhythm of your writing. I find it very hard to write to loud music.

I guess the most important reason why I like writing, is the fact that I am putting down to paper, what is going on in my head. I have been writing diaries for about 4 years now, and have to say, that by reading them, I can see how I have changed, and what makes me tick. I can also see how my writing itself has improved.

Lee Zavolinski

How do I feel about writing

When -
Why -
How -
Where -

I could write anywhere, anytime, anyplace. Why? I like to write, and get thought + ideas on paper. (Maybe someday be a writer?) keep dreaming
How? Thats harder, usually when I start writing it all comes out at once. I can hardly keep up with what I'm thinking + get it down on paper.

If I had a choice I like to write in a room, that's quiet. I can write where a lot of people are, although it does make it more difficult. I don't like assignments that have loads, & loads of guidelines. I hate grammer!

I can't stand writing perfect sentences, (probably, since I can't) with commas & semicolons. In fact I don't think I ever will be able, to write a perfect sentence. I think writing is also close to poetry, I like to write poetry.

(See never start a sentence with "But")

But, not poetry that Rhymes. Words are great, you can put them together & come up with something really worthwhile.

Ah, I also hate assignments when there is no room for imagination.

When I write I like to use a pen with chasacter, the paper doesn't matter because it's just recording. But, the pen (and But) is the tool through - which everything flows through.

D. Muller



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*I really did not (at first) understand the reason for the journal but now it is quite clear. It gives an outlet for frustrations, qualms, confusion while trying to write a good story. It makes you less apt to throw the story away or leave it unfinished.*

— from the process journal of
Jill Eisenstadt

*In the writing process approach, the teacher and student face the task of making meaning together. The task is ever new, for they share the blank page, an ignorance of purpose and conclusion. They start on a trip of exploration together, and they find where they are going as they get there.*

— Don Murray
"Writing as Process: How Writing
Finds Its Own Meaning"

**DAY TWO**

I still had thirty-five students. They had all decided to stay in the class. I returned each of the first day's papers with a personal note attached but no grades. I explained that grades on the paper would simply reflect my taste, and the clever among them might begin writing for me. I thought I had made the grade "thing" clear by what I had said the day before, but apparently traditions die hard. (By the end of the cycle I had read every piece of work they had submitted without grading any of them, but each time I returned a piece, the question of grades would surface.)

Reading what they had submitted the evening before, I was struck by how readable and fine each paper was. Ironically, I realized the assignment I had given them on writing was really product about process and their process being written in their journals was a form of product. I did not want to confuse them with this discovery, but I did want to distinguish between the actual motions and rituals they observed before and after writing and the writing of product itself. The journal entries which would accompany any writing would be done in or out of class. The journal would be a way for them to keep track of what was making writing easy or difficult for them. For now, I wanted to discuss some of their obstacles in writing so I asked for a volunteer to read his or her piece. Ricky Di Maio read first:

*When someone tells me to write, my brain automatically begins to click and think about what to write. My mind sometimes fights with my hand and I tend to leave out a word or the statement becomes tangled. . . . I can never just sit down and write. I need to think about a situation and then my mind pauses and my hand holding pen pauses . . .*

Many students echoed Ricky's sentiments about the mind being quicker than the pen. Next, Donna Bair read:

*Writing releases all that's inside me. Sometimes an idea pops into my mind while I'm just walking down the street and I get really mad if I don't have paper to write it down. . . . I like to write at home because school can be distracting. I'm pretty observant and noises sometimes break my train of thought—like right now I can hear a teacher across the hall giving an assignment. I can, also, hear the girl next to me sliding her arms across the desk as she writes. . . . Writing has always been a pleasure for me—I feel like I'm communicating with the whole world. I want to please people and make them laugh or cry or be serious. I guess I'm pretty egotistical 'cause I like to have all attention on me through my writing.*

Before I knew it forty minutes were over and we had only begun to recognize our own processes. As the students were walking out, I gave them copies of "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" by Katharine Anne Porter and asked them to read it for tomorrow's class. "This is a writing class, not literature," yelled Bruce good naturedly. There was no doubt I was really going to love this class.

That afternoon, as I was leaving the building, a student in my process class, a senior named Michael, was hanging around the parking lot. He walked over and handed me some papers. He hadn't passed in his work with the class because he claimed he couldn't bear to hand in messy work. He had re-copied it. I thanked him and smiled and said good-bye. His writing about writing was as follows:

*I don't like to wright mostly because I get Embarased because I can't spell wright and my sentence structur stinks. but when I do wright I only do it to get things out of my mind or to relax my mind. Like I would like to wright well or spell wright. I want a fancy hand wrighting but I can't so I don't wright that much and when I do it is for me to read or something like this, I half to do it. I dont remember what the format is or What to say. It's like everything hasto flow out not thought out becaus when I think to much about it and it never sounds wright and I wind up throughing it away. so why wright when I just throw it out.*

That night I thought of the poignancy of Michael's piece. Like most of the other pieces, Michael's demonstrated how internal and external factors hindered the process of writing. But despite misspelled words and punctuation errors, Michael's piece had a structure. I could imagine Michael's frustration in other classes. It made me think of all the students who crumpled paper and then handed in nothing. Putting pen to paper might not have taken place, but the process of it did. Michael could not have helped but hear the sophistication of the other students and perhaps their skill inhibited him from handing his work in. I would have to watch and encourage some students' processes more or perhaps I would lose them. I had been lucky with Michael.

*It took me awhile to arrive at this form but I got to it by being somebody else in the story and taking their point of view.*

— from the process journal of
Mark Seales

*Although I'm pretending to be Granny, some of my thoughts and personal convictions are reflected in her thoughts and words. I realized my ideas on death were becoming hers as well.*

— from the process journal of
Barbara Eisman

*If youngsters are steeped long and fully in good literature of all sorts, the first stories they write may well be very obvious borrowings of content just as their play acting is largely taking on the roles they see around them, but through this imitation, they identify with story-tellers and become like them. Not only is this imitation desirable, but so is changing a piece of literature into another form.*

— James Moffett and Betty Jane Wagner
*Student Centered Language Arts and Reading*

**DAY THREE**

During my free period I printed the following options on the side board:

1. Pretend to be any character mentioned in the story "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" and re-tell the story from that person's point of view.
2. Change the ending of the story or write it as if you are younger or older than you appear in the story.
3. Change the genre by re-telling the story as if it were a play or a poem.

At 11:05 they were in the same seats they had taken the first day although I had said they could sit anywhere. I explained the options on the board and told them we would have two class periods to complete one of the three writing assignments. We began to write. Even though I had read the story before, I found myself re-reading it. One passage in particular affected me.

"*I want you to pick all the fruit this year and see that nothing is*

*wasted. There's always someone who can use it. Don't let good things rot for want of using. You waste life when you waste good food. Don't let things get lost. It's bitter to lose things."*

For a moment I thought about the parallel between Granny about to lose her life and losing things and death and rotting fruit and the idea that food or fruit could symbolize much more. It was strange to stumble on the power of fine writing by trying to re-write it. I wondered how the kids were dealing with the story.

The room was quiet. I looked at Michael and a few of the others who I thought might have a problem. They seemed to be working without me yet with me. In a strange way I felt a sense of compatriotism.

*I find it much easier the way the class is taught, because there is no specific pressure directed on you. I mean you don't have to write a story neat or seven pages long or even complete it. When these things are not directed to you, you do them naturally. At least I find it so. I think the teacher really knows what she's doing 'cause she seems to be experiencing the problems in writing too.*

— from the process journal of
Mark Seales

*Last night while I was writing my short story, I had a lot of difficulty. First of all, it took me about an hour to finally sit down and write. I kept on trying to find excuses, like watering my plants, taking a shower etc. The truth was I really didn't feel like writing. . . . I think this class is too hard for me.*

— from the process journal of
Mary Imperato

**DAY FIVE**

It was hard to know what was happening for each of my students in their pieces. Usually a teacher collects the work, reads it, grades it, and often writes a comment. My students had been writing for two straight days in class, and naturally it seemed they wanted my approval. After the first day of writing, a few of them wanted me to read their stories, but I asked them to hold their work. I did want to be there for them, but more than that I wanted them to begin to trust each other as an audience.

It was a Friday. We sat in a circle, and I began by saying it was possible to learn from each other. The key to revising a piece of work in a group was built on trust and knowing that members would not be negative. The ability to listen to a writer's work and afterwards allow a writer to express his view seemed to be a cornerstone in a revision group. Today, I hoped to demonstrate how this community worked.

I asked for a volunteer to read the point-of-view paper on Granny. John read. He was a strong writer, and the students' immediate response when he was finished was positive and genuine. I asked if anyone could repeat any part of the piece in a questioning tone to John. Bruce said, "John, I think what you're saying is George jilted Granny because he was

afraid of her being so strong." John said that was true partially, but he felt Granny had been jilted by a lot of people. Bruce wanted to make a point but I interrupted. I wanted John to keep speaking, so I encouraged him to expand on what he meant. He paused and then said, "Well, her husband and daughter died, and in the end doesn't God disappoint her, too? I mean she asked for a sign and she doesn't get one." I asked him how that was important to his story. John looked at me. I could see he was feeling vulnerable, but I wanted him to make a connection between his expressed intent and his actual draft. He sensed there was a difference in what he had written and what he wanted to write. John was writing by talking. "I still think she's strong," he added, "but disappointed is important to add. Really important, although she's stronger than the disappointment. After all she's Granny Weather-all." John's face brightened with those last words. He had made a small discovery and it excited him.

I wanted the class to understand that the power of a group was to help the writer see his or her piece more clearly. That was why I stopped Bruce from pursuing his own line of reasoning in response to John's draft. A direct question by Bruce might have shifted the focus from what John wanted to say to what Bruce wanted to hear.

I read my piece next. Part of it was

> *. . . Mother. Sounds strange. The word alone without the person. The silence now where she used to be. The lapses—the time she left me to myself. So much time—more than I imagined I spent on her. Tea in the mornin' toast in the afternoon. Watchin the pantomime of her face. The jaw stretchin' and movin' the eyes vacant but laughin,' always laughin' watchin' me as if I were a fool. That's what irked me most. The way she looked at me, almost to the last. I could see her thinkin' I was an idiot of sorts. I loved her just the same. I wanted her to see what I'd done.*

After I finished, there was silence. Mary volunteered to "active listen."* She began, "So, I think what you said was the word 'Mother' now sounded strange to you. That there was silence where she used to be. Then I heard you say what you did for her, but that she just looked at you like you were a fool. You also said you loved her but you wanted her to see what you had done for her."

"Yes," I responded, pausing because there was something else I wanted to say but didn't know how to say it. I continued, "I suppose

* "Active listening" is the first step in Sondra Perl's "Developing a Vocabulary of Response Steps for Members of a Writing Group," an excellent model for training student response teams. See Appendix B.

Cornelia needed an acknowledgement from Granny. Maybe like a sign or gesture from her. In a way, that's what Granny needed from God at the end of the story." That's a parallel I hadn't seen before. I had made a discovery. Mary smiled. The class seemed impressed.

I asked them to pair off and read to each other practicing this technique of simply repeating a part of the story and then waiting for the writer to comment. I also listed the following questions on the board: "What parts of the story do you like best? Why? What do you want to hear more about? What doesn't make sense to you in the story?" The questions could be used as guides after the listening exercises. After a writer read to his or her group, he or she could ask any or all of these questions to the members of a group to get response. We practiced listening the next day by reviewing techniques of responding to writing.

* * *

**GRANNY WEATHERALL REWRITTEN**

"Happy? It's Cornelia. Mother is very sick... she's dying, Happy. She's been asking for you; mumbling your name. What? Yes, Doctor Harry is here. No Happy, its nothing like an illness. Doctor Harry says its just old age. Please come Happy. What do you mean, how do I know she's dying? The doctor said so... her respiration is shallow; she keeps fading in and out of consciousness. What do you mean, what does an old country doctor know? You never offered to take her to another doctor? She has four children, dammit, and I'm the only one who does anything for her! Are you coming? Good. I'll be waiting."

That damn Happy. Always shirking her responsibilities to Mother. I don't know why she's Mother's favorite. I do



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everything for her, yet its Hepsy's name she mumbles. Lets see. I have to call Lydia and her no-good husband. I hope Mother doesn't say anything about him while he's within earshot.

He's liable to drag Lydia out of here and we won't see her for another six months.

"Lydia? Its Cornelia. Mother is very ill. Yes, honey, she's dying. Now don't you cry too. I need you to be strong. Just come quickly. Alright. 20 minutes. Bye."

Lydia was always so strong. Why is she falling apart now? I'm the emotional one, yet I don't know how I feel about Mother's approaching death. What am I saying? Of course I'm going to be devasted. I love her... she's my mother. But... things will be easier on the kids and Oscar. And of course myself. That's horrible! I would suffer a thousand discomforts to have my mother alive.

What phonies, those Siblings of mine. They'll cry at the funeral, should act like they can't stand the sorrow, yet I'm the one who has mother 365 days a year, who has to put up with her feebleness, her momblings of "the bridegroom who never came". They don't know what its like to have to forget about your own wedding anniversary


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because Mother can't be left alone for an evening. They never come to see her when I ask them. Its at <u>their</u> convenience, not mine.

Oh yes. I have to call Jimmy. At least he'll come and be strong for me. Always the rebellious brother. Never forgets her birthday or Christmas, but wouldn't think of giving up a weekend of his "free lifestyle" to keep Mother at his home for a few days. But he's here at crisis times.

"Jimmy? Cornelia. Look, Mother's dying. Can you come? How long? An hour? Alright. I love you too. Bye."

I always come straight to the point with Jimmy. I guess because he's a man, I figure he can take the news with no fillers or additives. That's the way he talks to me too.

It's funny. Sometimes I wonder how Mother thinks. I hear about George and Papa and Happy. They're all dead. They all disappointed her. Well she never paid as much but God knows that's true. Up to now, Mother's been strong. She has weathered it all.

Now her children are all coming to see her. Oh Mother, I know you don't want it this way. You never liked to be surprised. You'll never know how much I love you . . . Never.

Donna Bair



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# Granny Weatherall

If anyone told me it would happen to me, I wouldn't have believed them. "Lands sake," I thought, "he would come back. Mother was a fool of a thing, small and dainty but one of herself. Herbert admired that in her but he left me just the same. "Take a choice," he said, "me or her. I didn't marry the package of you." I nodded solemnly. I knew he would leave but I didn't think for good. I figured he'd get tired of waitin' around but he never did. Divorced me like that, and there I was, livin' with mother. Mother. Sounds strange. The word alone without the person. The silence now where she used to be. The leisure — the time she left me to myself. Not much privacy. She was always goin' about givin' me criticism of sorts not outright hostile but prodden' me just the same. She'd walk around the house and tell me she believed everything should be in its place. Clean neat and folded. Life was like that. So she claimed. "No cryin over spilt milk" was how she dismissed Herbert's leavin' me. So much time — more than I had ever imagined spent on nursin' her. Tea in the mornin' toast in the afternoon. Watchin the pantomime of her face — the jaw stretchin' and movin' the eyes vacant but laughin'. Always laughin' — watchin' me as if I were a fool. That's what irked me most. The way she looked at me. I could see her thinkin' I was an idiot of sorts. But I loved her [illegible]ame. Wanted her to see what I'd done. How I sacrificed... She never died.

But I looked her the same, although sometimes I wondered.



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Spunky of her drivin' around the countryside before she died. Got it in her head to say good bye her own way. Like her daddy would've. Wouldn't let me go with her. In the end, nobody but the doctor din' me. An many of 'em. Nobody came but before she died I saw her look past me, through me with yesterday. It was if my face had become Lydia's or Jenny's or George's or even Happy's dead face. It was as if I did not exist for nobody or as nobody. Yet in the end it was I who mothered her. What a strange circle! She was petted but lost that as best she could; married Father and had the love of us. When he died, she raised us the best she could. All of us married, except Herbert leaven me the way he did. And now it's over. I've done my duty. Tomorrow they'll be there for the funeral. After that I don't know what I'll do. They'll be no one to cook for or take care of 'cept me. I could start goin' to the meetin' hall and town more now. Course the house needs a paintin' and the fruit needs pickin'. Needed pickin' weeks ago but with mother sick... "Don't let things rot for want of vision." That's what mother would say - Then Jean, it's too late.

L. Rossi


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*Today, I accomplished a lot in class. Not only did I work on my story, I also felt better about it. The day before I started "letting myself go" in writing my story so it was pretty much on its way. I finally realized exactly what I wanted to say. I can't explain how relieved and content I felt when Ms. Rossi told us that the stories didn't have to be completed by Friday. It made my writing more relaxed.*

*It was, also, easier for me because I found a new place to write. By the lockers in the "C" wing. I sat on the floor. It's really nice and quiet.*

*I, also, felt great when Ms. Rossi came out to the hall and sat down and read my story. Not only was I extremely happy because she liked it, it was something more. I was amazed and thrilled that a teacher would sit down in the hall and help a student. She no longer feels like "the teacher" to me any more, more like a friend or someone who is just there to listen to your ideas and give her reactions. That's how I think it should be in every class. I feel much better about the class now. Last week I was ready to sign out of it. But no way. I guess I just had to adjust and so did she. She made me feel really confident today at exactly the right moment.*

— from the process journal of
Mary Imperato

1. *Hard to get started —topic too wide*
2. *Dilema—if it's too personal, I don't want to write it but if it's aloof from my life, I can't get into it. I drop my head to the table and fall asleep for 20 minutes.*
3. *Solution—I find a middle ground. I decide to write about one aspect of my personality.*
4. *Every which way I turn in my story. I hit stumbling blocks which hamper my progress.*
5. *I would rather write about something factual than something emotional. Why?*
6. *I find that I can't steer clear of sensitive ideas. I decide to plow through and see what I get.*
7. *The structure is all wrong.*

8. *I have a finished product.*

9. *I know it looks good in my eyes but what about the teacher's?*

— from the process journal of
Joseph Carlson

**DAY EIGHT**

The Granny Weatherall assignment, although novel to the kids, was based on a traditional approach and although they understood the story better by feeling like a character, essentially they were imitating Katherine Anne Porter. I began this class explaining the purpose for approaching a topic three different ways. Watching it take shape as the story shifted by the teller or the time frame or the genre could teach them not only about writing but about self. Yet in dealing with self, they were being vulnerable. I wanted to make this clear to them, but I also wanted them to know that no one need personalize the piece. As the writers they could control the narration whether it be first or third person. However, if they chose a topic that they really wanted to explore, that journey, although difficult, could be worthwhile.

Through the exercise we were now going to do, we would be moving from rewriting someone's story from different points of view to creating our own stories. To find a personal experience worth devoting almost nine weeks of writing to, we used an untraditional approach, one developed by Sondra Perl in the summer Writing Project. Sondra had based her instructions for composing on the work of E. Gendlin. She observed that when writers pause, when they go back and repeat key words, what they seem to be doing is waiting, trying to focus on what is still perhaps vague and unclear. The image, word, or phrase that emerges might capture that sense.

I was doing a variation of the composing process. I asked the students to get comfortable in their seats. Then I asked them to ask themselves, "Of all the things I know about, what would I like to write about now?" Then I asked them to jot these ideas down. I explained it could be one thing or it could be a list. After about five minutes, I asked them to ask themselves, "Now that I have a list, whether it be long or short, is there anything else I've left out, any other piece I'm overlooking, maybe even a word?" After pausing for a few minutes, I asked them to look over their list and select one of the words which interested them. I instructed them to take a deep breath and ask themselves, "What are all the parts I know about this topic?" I explained that at this point their responses could be another list, or maybe a note, a dialogue, a poem, or even a developed paragraph. Some students were writing what looked to be many pages. Others seemed stuck. A few questioned why they had

to write so much. I told them that sometimes we don't know what we want to say about a topic until we write. All of this writing was a way for them to begin to see what they might want to say. It was also a way to generate a topic with which they would feel comfortable. They wrote for another ten minutes. Then I asked if they could take a fresh look at the topic and make room for what they didn't yet know. "Ask yourself," I questioned, "what's important about this that I haven't said yet? See what comes; it might be a word or an image, or a phrase. It may capsulize or embody what you're thinking." Then I asked them to reflect on this word and perhaps write what meaning that word had for them. I asked them not to worry if there was no logic to what they were writing. Rather, they should simply feel relaxed and make sure they were emptying themselves of whatever was bothering them.

When this procedure was over, I hesitated to ask what had happened. Many of the students expressed a kind of wonder at how relaxed they felt. Many of them did feel as if a burden had been lifted. Later as I looked at their process journals I saw they had recorded lists of concerts, friends, siblings, family deaths, deaths of peers through drugs and drunken driving, failure at school, childhood memories. It was curious that later as they were writing their pieces, only one young man chose to write about the topic he had come in contact with on this day, while almost all of the young women had eagerly chosen to.

* * *

## FROM THE WORKS OF HENDRICK KERNISANT

*I got my first job at the age of twelve. It was a paper route. I stayed with it until I was fourteen then I had to quit it because I had to go on vacation.*

*I had an OK vacation in Canada. When I came back that year My old boss came back over My House and offered me another Route, wich I accepted.*

*I kept My New route until I went to High school, then I quit. throughout High School in the 10th grade, I did not work. that Summer I looked for a job but did not find one. During the 11th grade I started to work for my uncle until last summer. last summer I did not want to work with him anymore so I got a job at Belmont Park. How I got the job was interesting because How I got the job always reminds me of the book Catch 22. To get a job at Belmont Park (in the backstretch) is a pain in the ass because they do not let you go in backstrech to look for a job, and if you do not into the backstrech how do you get a job. So to get a Job in there I had to wait by the*

*gate for two days until a trainer on the inside needed a hotwalker bad enough to call the gate and ask to send him someone.*

*I finally got a job. My trainer's name was Doc Schmidt. I got training as a hotwalker. I then became a groom. $160.00 a week. That is as much work experience I have had in my short happy life.*

*Now I am unemployed.*

Process

I Started this in the Middle of last week. It took Me days before I got an Idea. I got the Idea from this guy in my group named Howard, He was writing about what jobs he held and I decided to do the same. the ball rang and I kept writing about this Monday and Stopped. Yesterday I finished. Writing this Was easy. it took me so long because I would stop from Moment to Moment.

Process entree

I guess it is Kind of ~~funny~~ odd having the process at the beginning but I Must do that so you will Know that this is part of My Last assignment In wich you felt that I did not tell enough about My Job at Belmont park. (this should be counted as a separate journal entree?) OK?

*Last year I had been working at Belmont for the Summer, in the backstrech. I had been living near Belmont for about six years and never before had I been to the backstretch.*

*The backstretch is the part of the track where the barns are. It is like a little world. In the backstrech, each barn is occupied by two three and sometimes four trainers each trainer has his own people working for him. There is the Hotwalker who simply excersices the horses by making them walk every morning. Then there is the groom who cleans out the stalls, puts bandages on the horses, cleans and feeds them. Each groom is usually in charge of about*



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*four horses. Also, there is the exercise boy who rides the horses to the excercise track to work them out. And at the top there is the assitant trainer whose title says it all.*

*In My last Report I explained How Hard it was to get a job there and when I finally got a job, I was hired as a hotwalker by trainer W.F. Schmidt. As a hotwalker I had to be there at seven in the morning to exercise the horses. I usually had to walk them about 25 minutes if they did not go out to the track to workout. If they did go out to the track to workout I would have to excercise them at least 40 minutes after they had gotten their bath. My trainer (boss) W.F. Schmidt was also a vetenarian who seemed to be out of practice. Every one called him Doc Schmidt. Doc Schmidt was a man in about his fifties which even I was taller than. He had funny hair, about the same color and texture of a brillo pad and always had a cigar in his mouth that was never lit.*

*When most trainer were up and at it, Doc Schmidt would probably be asleep. He always came (showed up) to work (ha, ha, work. the man never worked) around 10:30 AM. Since Doc never worked, everything was taken care of by his assitant trainer Vinny.*

*No Matter How Doc sounds to you he was a superb ping pong player. Once a girl working for him told me that reminded him of Uncle Giggles Flinstone (if you have ever seen that episode of the Flintstones).*

*Vinny the assistant trainer was a guy in about his early thirties, late twenties, whose wife was working as a hotwalker for Doc Schmidt too.*

*Vinny hired me and gave me a try as a hotwalker. He noticed that I was pretty good so during the summer when one of the grooms left he moved me up from Hotwalker to Groom. As Groom, my weekly pay was almost doubled. I liked grooming except for the times when I had to clean the stalls which I learned to like.*

*Some horses urinated so much over night that when you started to clean out the stalls in the morning the ammonia smell from the urine would be so strong that if you did not run out of the stall the smell would knock you out. Some of my other duties as a groom were tacking up horses, bathing them, changing their drinking water, making sure they had feed in their stalls, picking their feet and brushing them.*

*Sometimes I would have to come back to work in the afternoon when one of my horses were going to race. I would have to brush them up, tack them up, take them to the grandstand and take them to the Paddock. After the race I would have to take them back to the backstrech, give them a bath and have a hotwalker exercise him. Some owners really cared about their horses they came by about once or twice a week in their Mecedes or cadillac's to see how their horse was doing. Some owners I never saw, I guess they had bought their horses for tax purposes or something. During that summer I,*

*also, noticed that a lot of the workers in the backstrech who also lived in the backtsrech rarely left the track. It is as though the track was their world and they did not care about anything else that happened outside of the track. I hoped that I would never become like one of them.*

*Though During those Months of working at Belmont I got kicked once pretty bad and got bit a couple of times I made a lot of new Friends and became aware of the world of horse racing. I got to know the workers, the work, the betters and the animals they bet on, the betting system and everything else that comes along with thoroughbred racing. It was an experience that I really enjoyed.*

Process

it was raining out when I started and it is still raining out. at first it was hard to think because I had a headache. Maybe from last nights pot smoking. then I took a shower and had dinner, watched a little T.V. then came back to finish the report. then thoughts started coming fast and easyily. I was interupted once by My mother about some crazy add she saw in the penny saver. At the end of the paper I started getting that headache again.

I enjoyed writting about working at Belmont because, writing on the subject brought out memories and feelings on that subject that I never thought I had.


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*Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic,*

*I'm sitting here in my room, at my desk, trying to write my first point of view. I just can't do it now. I try to think, and my mind wanders off to another place. Sometimes, I go into a blankness and when I snap out of it, I can't really think of what just happened. I just seem to turn my mind off for a little while. No thoughts. Just plain nullness. BUT NOW IT'S ANNOYING BECAUSE I WANT TO GET THIS ASSIGNMENT ROLLING!*

*Tic, Tic, Tic, Tic. Oh there's the clock again.*

— from the process journal of
Lee Zwolinski

*Writing this paper from another person's point of view was hard because if the topic is you, you don't want to brag, but you don't want to sound bad. So what do you do—let it flow.*

— from the process journal of
Michael Minor

**DAY TEN**

It was a Friday and I could tell by the way my class came in that writing was not a priority. Perhaps I was feeling it, too. The weather had been unbelievably hot for the end of September. I had specifically asked the class not to write last night, wanting to start the first point of view today. I discovered that a few students who had decided to write their stories from a point of view other than their own were having difficulty adopting a different persona. I decided they needed more practice in the idea of point of view before they would begin their pieces.

I asked the students to think of one good friend and one enemy. Then I suggested they write for five minutes as each. The topic would be themselves seen from the respective points of view of the friend and the enemy. There was some laughter and we began to write.

It was a relatively simple assignment which pinpointed some of the problems of stepping out and seeing ourselves from another point of view. When the time was up, I couldn't believe how many students wanted to read. I told everyone that we would read after we spent a few minutes recording in our process journal the ease or difficulty we'd had

in assuming our friend's or enemy's personae.

To my amazement, all the students read either their points of view or their process journals. At the end of the class, I told them how good it was to hear from everyone. Bruce informed me that on a Friday, a class would do anything not to write. I was amazed: what I had seen as a writing assignment, the class had seen as fun. Perhaps the two had meshed.

• • •

FROM THE WORKS OF
JOE KACZMAR

Point of View I: Night Sequence

Echoes of the Broadway
Everglades

Prelude:
"The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway"

Early morning Manhattan,
Ocean winds blow on the land.
The Movie-Palace is now undone
The all-night watchmen have had their fun.
Sleeping deeply on the midnight show,
It's the same old ending — time to go.
Get out!
It seems they cannot leave their dream.
There's something moving in the sidewalk steam,
And the Lamb lies down on Broadway.

Nightmare figures feel their pains.
Drugstore take down the chains
Metal motion comes on bursts


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But the gas station can quenched that threat
Suspension cracked on unmade road
The trucker's eyes read "Overload"
And out of the subway
Real Imperial Aerosol Kid
Exits to daylight, spraygun hids
And the lambs lie down on Broadway.

The lamb seems right out of place
Yet the Broadway street scene finds a
focus in its face
Somehow it's lying there
Brings a stillness to the air.
Though man-made light, at night is
very bright
There's no whitewash motion
As the neon dims to a coat of white.
Real Imperial Aerosol Kid,
Wipes his gun, he's forgotten what he
did
And the Lamb lies down on Broadway.

Suzanne tired, her work all done,
Thinks-money-honey-neon-neon.
Caliman's redrict glove wounds the horn
And the Wounded King spits out his scorn.
Wonder woman, you can draw your blind!
Don't look at me! I'm not your kind-
I'm Real!
Something inside me has just begun
Lord Knows what I have done
And the lamb lies down on Broadway

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On Broadway—
They say the lights are always bright on
Broadway
They say there's always magic in the air."

by Peter Halvirel
(Yellow Dog Music, Inc.
ASCAP, 1944)

New York crawls out of its weary sleep. The stragglers are asked to leave the warmth of the all-night theatre to face the cold, stark desolation of morning Broadway. A steaming mist begins encompassing Grand Central and begins creeping its way to twenty-second street. The sky is overcast as the wall of Death starts its declination from the sky towards its street-bound destination. And the lamb's eyes flicker. The people act as if nothing were there.

The rising sun reveals the figure of our hero Raol, escaping an alley in which the letters of the namesake have been printed on the blackest of inks. And the lamb runs from its rest. Patrolman Donowski eyes Raol with a certain unsure suspicion and Raol thinks only that he is hiding something. And the Lamb lies down on Broadway.

Raol reaches Grand Central, a note of fear is struck as Raol is closed in by the wall. The figure running for Columbus Circle. Each time he looks, the wall has


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moved a block closer. As Raul increases his distance from the wall, the wind's monstrous velocity increases, chilling Raul and blowing the dust into his eyes. And the lamb's fur ruffles as it lifts its head to greet the wind. More grimy Central Park originated dust blows unrelentlessly and soon covers Raul's clothing and body. Imagine running into a wall of fresh, wet cement. Our hero cannot move. He lingers hovering in the air, somewhat similar to a fly waiting for a windshield on the freeway. The world is now a jungle sounds of animalistic death surround Raul's ears; echoes of the Broadway Everglades. He soon falls unconscious.

Raul regains consciousness in a murky half-light. All he can hear is the gentle sound of swooshing air. Jokingly, he thinks "ha, this is an air-conditioned nightmare." He is wrapped in some warmly laced cocoon. Oblivious to any pain he experienced before, he is comfortable once more. "Just like mother's ~~womb~~ womb"; he ponders. His cocoon is in some kind of cave. It's stark, off-white walls echo the drops from the water hole. This is a far cry from Broadway's burning hell. In a cozy euphoria he returns to a state of sleep only to be awakened to the harsh reality that the cocoon has melted away and has been replaced by the steel bars of a cage. As fear and

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shock register, he sees his brother John outside the cage. Rael pleads to the brother to be let loose. But John only seems deaf to all the noise and a silent tear of blood trickles down his cheek and he turns to leave the cage. But as John leaves, Rael's captivity dissolves as the cage disappears and Rael is left spinning like a top.

When the revolution stops, Rael, feeling the urge to vomit, sits down on a factory's highly smooth + polished white floor and waits for his dizziness to stop. As he looks up an overweight salesLady goes into her speal, "This is the Grand Parade of Lifeless Packaging. Where you are about to see are in fore servicing. A light malfunctioning has rendered some personalities inaccurate and so their looks do not reflect their true value. Rael, while walking amongst the package notices the familiarity of some of the faces. Seeing that they are members of his old gang, he begins to worry about his safety. In a sense, he laughs momentarily, thinking "How quaint, imperfect packages for imperfect people". But the shock of seeing his brother with a number nine stamped on his forehead sets him running away; no longer with laughter in his mind. He runs about ground into a reconstruction of his life He sees before his eyes too many plague-like events. His parents patterns, his



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joining the street gang; his lives lay up in a Brooklyn jail. Soon Raol returns to a hallway he had previously passed. This was a long carpeted corridor. The walls are painted in red ochre and are marked by a strange insignia. He sees people down the corridor kneeling. They move in struggling motions towards a door at the end. The carpet crawlers; poor creatures condemned to seek a way out of a room with no way out. Raol finds out from one of the crawlers that they seek a spiral staircase, a way out. Not asking how he can move freely he climbs the stairs to a chamber with a great many doors. A group of people stand in the center, and from their conversation ~~conversation~~ he picks up that there are 32 doors and only one leads out. Through all the shouting he stands by an old lady who is totally blind & Tae beckons Raol to lead her away from the noise, and because she is a creature of the caves, can lead Raol to safety. She leads him through a door and quietly asks him to sit down and tells him that they will come for him soon. Amongst all the ensuing confusion, Raol gets a chance to meet the hero: Death. Death has prepared a costume for the occasion, he likes to call it the Supernatural Anaesthetist ( seemingly very appropriate,

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if you get the point :). Death says he enjoys traveling and enjoys meeting new people. Rael sarcastically smiles at Death's slight pun. Rael turns but then turns again and ~~Death~~ Death is gone. A pinch of pain acknowledges that Rael is still alive as he smacks himself. "merely an illusion", he suggests.

Rael notices a mushy smell and sees a crack in a rubble of rocks where the smell is emanating from. He clears enough stones to crawl through his make-shift crawlspace. When he drops through, instead of touching ground he falls directly into a pool of nectar. From a distance three ripples are approaching him through the water. Three snakelike figures with the diminutive head and breasts of a beautiful woman approach Rael. The Yamia invite him to taste the pink-nectar water. As soon as he has swallowed some of liquid a blue luminescence drips off the skin. The Yamia lick the liquid very gently, as Rael with each gentle touch feels the need to give more. The Yamia begin to nibble at his skin and with the first taste of blood, their eyes blacken and their bodies shake. a very distraught and emotionally shaken Rael watches helplessly as his lovers die. Rael, with a passion to die as one with them, takes and eats their bodies and soon after, struggles to leave the

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pond.

Leaving from the same door as he entered, he finds himself in a similar ghetto as the one in his home, the lower East Side. But instead of the streetwise buddies he sees a group of people of grotesque ill fate. His stomach fills with a mixture of bile and week old coffee. People to puke by. Realizing that the Hyperman themselves have gone through the same romantic tragedy as he, he soon realizes that his own body now mirrors those of the Hyperman.

Amongst the twisted, tortured faces of the Hyperman he finds what is left of his brother John. The two grotesque figures hug each other. John bitterly explains that the Lamia regenerate themselves and feed upon the ~~ecstacde~~ ecstacies of their victims. John continues and says that the only way out is to meet the reclusive Doktor Ryper.

Overcoming the ordeal of traveling to the Doktor, they are both given their respective potions. But a raven flies down and steals the remainder of Rael's vile. Rael finds himself alone again as John refuses to chase a black raven: a terrible omen. Just as Rael closes the distance between himself and the raven, the bird leads them to a ravine and drops the vile into the rushing waters below. But Rael looks up



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and sees a window in the sky in which he can see Broadway. But there are screams from the waves. It is John caught in rapids. Thoughts of John's betrayal shuffle through Raul's head as he sees his window swiftly closing. Instead of the first alternative, Raul dives into the water and tries to reach John. Raul knocks John unconscious to get him to stop struggling. Raul fights his way to land with John's motionless body. As Raul looks into John's eyes for a sign of life, he staggers back in shock for it is not his brother's face but his own. Instantly the immediate surroundings turn to a purple haze and both bodies fuse together and then fade out...

The sun has returned to its western sleep haven. The city has shut down for the night. The vagrants return to the [redacted] theaters and burned out buildings. And the light dies down on Broadway.

* This work written with acknowledgement to the [redacted] genius of Peter Gabriel of "Genesis" whose "The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway" concept inspired me.


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*The work which you asked for is damn hard. The hardest part is to get started. You got to think of a story that's interesting and enjoyable for people my age and good enough for you. I can't think of a story interesting enough in my whole damned life. (I hope you don't mind cursing but I am a curser.)*

— from the process journal of
Andy

*I wrote about my brother and my father in dialogue. I had to think hard to remember certain events in my house. When I did, I felt ready to write. I wrote for two hours. I think that now I'm used to what you have to do to write. You have to write.*

— from the process journal of
Ramon Cortes

**DAY ELEVEN**

The night before, I sat down with my marking book. In the columns next to students' names there were no numbers, just comments on the work they had submitted and my perceptions of how they were in their groups. There was very little next to Andy's name. Was he doing nothing or was he bogged down in process? He had been in my creative writing class the year before, and I knew he could write. I checked his attendance and realized he had been truant. I called his home and spoke with his mother. She was afraid he was going to drop out of school. I asked her to have him see me, but Andy did not come to class.

I returned the first point of view assignment. I saw that some of the students revised, a few edited, but most just re-wrote their papers so they appeared neater. To help students with revision I had given them a series of questions devised as a writing exercise by Marcie Wolfe, a teacher from the N.Y.C. Writing Project. The questions were

1. What is the main point or feeling of the piece?
2. Which part of the piece seemed most interesting to you?
3. Should any details be left out? Which ones? Why?
4. What would you like to know more about in this piece?

I had put these questions on the board originally and read my own writing. After students "active-listened" to my writing, I asked them to

respond to the first three questions. After hearing their responses, I then answered the fourth question. Apparently the groups did not follow this procedure totally. Yet I realized that they did provide an audience and they did encourage each other to write. To encourage more of the revision process, I printed up sheets of the questions above. These sheets were to be attached to each student's writing. The group was responsible for answering in writing the first three questions, while the author would answer the fourth. The second points of view reflected group response and the writers found revision easier. Somehow the attached questions seemed to make the difference.

Revision groups met on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Writing took place in class on Mondays and Wednesdays. We shared portions of our process journals at the beginning of class on Fridays. For the second half of the class, students were free to write or meet in groups while I and five student editors worked with students who had problems with usage. An editor sat with a person who felt he or she needed help. Basically an editor listened as the writer read his or her piece. In most cases, writers would correct their errors in their oral reading. As editors, we stressed that punctuation was something that could be heard and we patiently listened and watched as writers fixed their errors. A person who felt he or she needed more than cursory help with grammar, spelling, or usage would have an editor fill out a proofreading sheet similar to the one below (Figure 1). The proofreader would listen to the student's work as the student read. If a student did not hear or see a mistake in punctuation, spelling, grammar, or usage, the editor would identify the line and mark it on the proofreading sheet. If the error was in punctuation, the writer would rewrite the sentence (on the line provided on the proofreading sheet) using the proper punctuation or rewriting the sentence so it would read correctly. In this way, a student who used a comma where a semicolon was appropriate would understand with the help of an editor that he had written a run-on sentence. In rewriting he could then learn to use the semicolon, he could choose to rewrite the sentence with a conjunction, or he could use two sentences. With a spelling error, the writer would either spell the word correctly by using one of the dictionaries with the editor or he might decide to use a synonym by using the thesaurus.

Revised papers were written over, but edited papers were submitted with the proofreading sheet.

Writer's Name_____

Reader's Name_____

This is a proofreader's sheet which will help you with editing your paper. Number each line of your point of view paper. An editor will pinpoint lines where there are errors, and with his or her help you will make the corrections in the third column.

| ERROR | LINE # | REWRITE BY WRITER |
|---|---|---|
| Punctuation | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| Spelling | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| Grammar | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |
| Usage | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ |

**Figure One**
**Proofreading Sheet**

That afternoon I found the following note in my mailbox. Attached to it were seven attempts at a story. The note read,

> *The door is closing and it's getting dark. The only light is from outside. It is said, dreams die hard but they do die and it is hard for me to give up the dream. The soul wanders looking for a door to escape to*

*until finally the last door slams shut and there is no escape.*

*One of the hardest things to live with is the thought of what one could have been and what one is. I am a loser. I have no pride and get no respect because I deserve none. I have talents but I do not work them or use them and that is why I am what I am.*

*I have more to write but this was going to be my last piece of literature before I resign from your class and school but I think I will come back tomorrow and see if you give me a chance to pass.*

*Andy*
*one time dreamer.*

The next day I gave Andy the following note:

*Dear One Time Dreamer,*

*Dreams die hard, but the choice you see as mine is really yours. Obviously your packet of story attempts entails quite a bit of writing. Since process is attached to each attempt, it satisfies any teacher suspicion I might harbor that you have written them before.*

*You are welcome back tomorrow or the next day. The door is not closed unless you shut it.*

Andy came back a few days later.

* * *

FROM THE WORKS OF
JON KAUFMAN

Entry 28

At first I couldn't write. I kept thinking about what Essie said. Of course I asked for it, but when she saw I was upset she said I shouldn't try to be the me I am now if I'm writing as a little boy. Then she said she read this book called If Beale Street could Talk. She said it made her think of objects as things that could observe. She thought I should write from my house's point of view or maybe the walls.



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Personally I didn't think that idea was good but I went home and thought about it. Nothing came to me so I sat on the floor of my room and asked myself what's stopping my writing. I felt like a fool but I stayed still. I remembered being a little boy and hiding in my room when my parents were fighting. I could almost remember the words. I didn't want to think about it too much but I thought about the walls of my house. I think I understand now.

*IF THE WALLS COULD TALK*

*If the walls could talk, they would never shut up. They would ramble on about lies that were told, about hitting that may never have taken place, about crying that at times never ended.*

*They say there are three sides to every story. The father's, the mother's, and the truth; the walls could tell them all, if the walls could hear.*

*You must take the good with the bad they say, so you should not forget the good times and the pleasing times, but most are not willing to accept that. The walls are always willing, they have no choice.*

*If the walls had emotions, they would decay from the salt of the tears, they would turn odd shades of red from cringing with anger. They would rumble with joy from occasional spurts of laughter, they would crack and peel from intense moments of awkward frustration. They would explode from the stress, the friction that often moved about through the rooms, so dense that you could cut it with a knife.*

*If the walls could ask questions there would only be two. Why must it be this way? Why can't that question be answered?*

*After it was over, the fighting, and the hassles. A young boy still wept, out of fear? Out of questions gone unanswered? It could be. It is probably that he doesn't understand. Yet no one is to blame, since a boy of his age will only understand what he wants to, not what is supposed to, or should.*

*To see his mother cry drained his heart and for some reason made*

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*greater a dislike for his father. He knew he felt this way only because when he saw his mother weep he knew his father was on the other end of the telephone.*

*If the walls could have talked they would have suggested that the boy leave the room and ignore what he sees, the wall would have said, "You will understand, it will be a while, but you will understand." The boy would have quivered with uncertainty, for he would have desperately wanted to be with his mother. The walls would have been known to be wise, the boy would have listened.*

*Grandiose responsibilities, and petty misunderstandings led to several arguments between the lonely young boy and his mother. Troubled times they were indeed, a brief bout of welfare, and a couple litters of kittens to care for, to mention a couple.*

*Remarried to two others were the mother and father, the father after one year, the mother after four. Happy they were that it made the young boy glad.*

*Years ago it was. Arguments of the divorce have totally subsided. Comfortable living arrangement for them all have been made. They are all 10 years older now. They are all set in their ways. They are all happy now. . . .*

*If the walls could talk*
*they would have been*
*right.*

*I understand now!*

## FROM THE WORKS OF LORRAINE HAWKINS

*VIBES*

*Does it not sound better in a vaccum?*
*When sound is muffled, choked*
*Plausible death of words*
*Yet not of feeling.*
*Bouncing from the speaker's tongue*
*Invisible vibrations*
*Stir the fire and cackle the kernels*
*Glorified sensations*
*Knowingly roasting and ruefully boasting*
*That poetry need not be spoken*
*To be related?*

*TAKEN BACK*

*My dreams*
*Always tug me back*
*To that downtrodden road*
*Where I jiggled during childhood,*
*Singing forgotten notes*
*Chanting forgotten rhymes*
*Catching twisted flyballs*
*In a manner that has escaped me.*
*My mind wont let me*
*Bury the past, draw the line*
*Place the tombstone where it belongs*
*And enjoy the happenings of now.*

*DEVIANT CHILD*

*Among a cluster of shadows*
*No illumination need be shone on me*
*To produce it's effect.*
*In the hood of my umbrage*
*Bent humbly forward I accept*
*The curse of my deviance.*
*Obstructed rays from the crescent*
*hollow moon*
*Lie passively on black stalks of branches*
*Wilted forest dwelling reveals*
*Entangled twigs and snarled leaves*
*Germinating from crooked marsh*
*Embedding my toes in the fecund slush.*
*I stand in one breathless moment*
*Tuned to the exotic pulse of my being*
*My gown curling about me like a luminous silverweb*
*I alone, in the solitude of my soul*
*I alone, in obscure imprecation.*
*The existence of my aberration*
*Intrigues not only the world, in it's vast*
*variations of decorum*
*Hidden by foliage, I too crouch*
*Cowering, Afraid of my own display of deviance.*

*TERMINATION*

*At the end of the passage, dim*
*A decaying black box obstructs*
*Engraved with skull and bone markings*
*In an ordorous crevice of rust.*
*Wound about like a shimmering veil*
*Enmeshing passers in its devious snare*
*Even bats in black armor fight to escape*
*While such creatures as rats scurry by, if*
*they dare.*
*Clinging to cobwebs, spiders spin wildly*
*Drunk from morbidity displayed in red ink*
*Revealed to them only is every man's fate*
*In their secrets they reel, in their secrets*
*they sink.*

*IMAGINATION*

*Gales of wind blow wildly in*
*Tossing debris, stones and leaves*
*In my corner, huddling—chilled*
*House of shadows breathlessly still.*
*Huge old grandpa clicks his teeth*
*He ticks away, old grandpa theif*

*Crevice, fissures echo paws*
*Mices scurring beneath dry splint boards,*
*Frightened I absorb the scuttling dance*
*Beneath the glint of the moon's silver glance.*

*Crevices, fissures echo paws*
*Beneath splintered wood of arid board.*
*Frightened I absorb the scuttling dance*
*Beneath the glint of the moon's silver glance.*
*Taut in my chair, with thoughts burried deep*
*beyond the realm of actual sleep.*

*Today we were reading our first point of view. Peter said something funny. We made jokes and wrote little anecdotes about what he said. I felt like I was writing for "National Lampoon." I wrote a five page story when I got home.*

— entry 7 from the process journal of Barry Goldstein

*I brought my stories to school and read them to my friends. They thought they were really funny. I wrote the whole day in all my classes. I was thinking of funny characters, situations and titles. It was getting a little frustrating trying to get new ideas but I did it.*

— entry 11 from the process journal of Barry Goldstein

*My parents took me to a restaurant. I listened to the people next to us. This conversation was so funny, I made my mother give me a menu to write it.*

— entry 20 from the process journal of Barry Goldstein

**DAY FOURTEEN**

For the last few days we realized the room we used for class was too small. I knew the auditorium was not used during the time of our class and so I unofficially switched rooms.

I had assigned students to groups last week, but today Barry and Bruce wanted to know why the class did not have a say in deciding on the groups. I really had no answer, so I allowed the students to re-choose their own groups. Most stayed with their original group, but a few felt strongly that they wanted to meet with friends. Barry and Bruce also questioned why the groups could only meet two days a week. They preferred to write at home and meet three times in groups. I felt the class had decided on two days for writing, two for revision, and Friday for editing or more writing. The class said nothing except for Steven, who finally said, "That was your decision. Couldn't you trust us to break into groups or just do writing if we need to?"

I looked around the auditorium. It was large enough for the class to meet the way they wanted. There was even a carpet so students could write on the floor if they wished. I knew once I allowed groups to function at their own pace, there would be some conflicts, yet there could be

growth in students' writing. My rules on two days for writing and two days for revision were, in actuality, arbitrary. The rules appealed to my sense of order as a teacher, but if I were to trust the groups and allow them freedom to decide whether they wrote and when they revised, I would have to recognize their autonomy. I allowed the groups to work out their own schedules.

The days began to take on a sameness. On certain days kids would be sitting or lying on the floor writing while two others might be editing or a group might be meeting. Sometimes a student would bring in cookies or pretzels for everyone. A few times students leafed through my own process journal. To the unskilled eye the room might have seemed chaotic.

* * *

FROM THE WORKS OF
JOHN SEUFERT

*ON LOSS*
*(Point of View I)*

*I remember my childhood as a very special period in my life. Like most people, my youth consisted mainly of a series of commonplace events which were irregularly interrupted by instances of extreme pleasure and pain. Luckily, my parents were able to provide an abundance of love and affection which made my childhood happier than that enjoyed by most other people. I had my fair share of painful experiences though.*

*One of my most vivid childhood memories centers around the death of my grandmother. I had barely known her. In my mind I pictured her as a faceless, formless, wisp of sweetness who baked delicious cookies and never forgot birthdays. My only real contact with her was a monthly crate of underripe oranges and a collection of exotic necklaces gathered from her travels to various places around the world. I was not even sure if I had any significant feelings for her at all. Yet, her death affected me in a strange way.*

*When the news came, I was preparing to leave for summer camp. An early morning phone call brought the news to my parents. When they told me, I went numb. I couldn't understand why I felt this way. She and I had no emotional ties binding us. We were just two strangers who happened to be related. It was no fault of mine. Yet, I felt numb.*

*When I learned that my parents planned to send me to camp anyway, I was appalled. Shouldn't I at least attend the funeral? Even if I didn't really*

*know this person, didn't I owe it to her? How could I go off to summer camp knowing that she had died? Was I supposed to carelessly sling off her death and lose myself in the usual goings-on of summer camp?*

*My parents couldn't understand why I wouldn't go. They tried every argument, reasonable and otherwise, to convince me. I stood firm. They reluctantly accepted my refusal but reminded me that keeping myself busy and amused over the summer would be my own responsibility. I accepted, welcoming the chance to sort out my feelings about my grandmother's death.*

*Looking back on this period, I now realize that I did a lot of growing up that summer. Perhaps not in the physical sense, but emotionally. I began to gain a youthful insight into the harsh realities of the real world. My child's world of carefree, irresponsible pleasure was abruptly shattered by the coldness of the outside world. Many of the things which I enjoyed before seemed childish and unreal. Nothing seemed to matter. For the first few days following the news of my grandmother's death, I simply moped around the house blindly groping for some answer which did not or would not make itself known to me.*

*I thought that I could find the answer within myself if I focused all of my attention inward and made myself oblivious to the outside world. I had come to this conclusion after realizing how unfair things were. Why had my grandmother been allowed to die? It just wasn't fair! Things had been so easy until this had happened. It was easy to believe in "happily ever after" and the fairy-tale permanence of my life until this. It just wasn't fair!*

*Up until this point, I had recognized death's existence as something which was separated from my world. I had also thought of it as something that could never happen to me. It had seemed a distant and unreal possibility.*

*The death of my grandmother hit hard. The ease at which my ideal world could be shattered stunned me. I felt helpless and confused. My grandmother's death made me realize how quickly and easily life could disappear. I was no longer invulnerable to death. Nor were my parents, my friends, or anybody else I cared about.*

*It didn't seem fair. Why did my grandmother have to die? At this point, I not only regretted her death, but also hated her as I had hated nobody before in my entire life. What right did she have to invade my world and destroy the things I believed in? What gave her this right? Why couldn't she just have gone on living surrounded by her cookies and exotic necklaces? Why couldn't she remain in her proper place on the fringes of my world? It just wasn't fair that this impersonal stranger who had held no significance in my life could affect me in this way.*

*Although they tried, my parents could not really understand my depression. They had recognized its source and had sought to ease my pain by diverting my attention to the things I had enjoyed before. They failed, but could not understand why. They could not realize that they were increasing*

*my pain by presenting reminders of the very thing I had tried to forget. If these misguided efforts had not been motivated by their intense love for me, I might have hated them as I now hated my grandmother. But their tender patience eventually helped heal my wounds. It is only now that I am able to understand this.*

*Perhaps my learning to cope with death created a responsibility which no child should be forced to bear. I had not asked for it; it had simply been presented to me as a choiceless matter. Yet, I regard my grandmother's death as an important part of my life. At that time, I didn't deal with any of the philosophical aspects of life and death. I was hurt, and only wanted to stop the hurt. I didn't understand why I felt the way I did but knew that I had to somehow ease my pain. When I realized that my search for someone or something to lash out at would end without my finding anything, I also realized that I would have to learn to accept death as a part of life. My grandmother was dead. Nothing would change that. It took a great deal of time before I could accept that. Looking back now with an adult's point of view has enabled me to understand clearly what and why I had gone through what I did. It was some time before I actually abandoned all of the things associated with childhood, but I regard my acceptance of my grandmother's death as my entrance into the real world.*

*ON LOSS*
*(Point of View II)*

*For as long as I can remember, I've wanted to be a writer. Perhaps my willingness to accept this inevitable fact has been greater during some periods of my life than others, but deep down inside, I have always known this to be true. For some strange reason which is unknown to me, I've been denying what I now recognize as something which is much more than an intense desire. The truth is, I need to write. Writing has become a great deal more than simply putting pen to paper and recording ideas. My writing has become an outlet for my perceptions of the world and has enabled me to cope with the inconsistency of life.*

*Patricia understood this, or at least I thought she did. Had she given me any reason to believe otherwise? Wasn't she really responsible for my decision to pursue my writing career? Wasn't she the first person who had been able to recognize my hidden desire?*

*Now she was gone. It really hadn't been sudden or unexpected. I had seen it coming. Even though I wouldn't allow myself to believe it, I had really known that I was kidding myself all along. There really wasn't anything I could have done to prevent it. Patricia simply would not consider my point of view and stubbornly refused to recognize the importance of my newest and greatest novel. For some unexplained reason, the old Patricia, the one I had*

*fallen in love with, had disappeared. She had completely vanished, only to be replaced by some cold, self-centered stranger who had attempted to prevent me from finishing the crowning achievement of my career.*

*I suppose my memories of our life together prevented me from understanding this change in her character. Whenever I tried to figure out what had happened between us, my mind wandered back to our meeting some ten years before while I was attending business school. The contrast between the past and the present was incredible. Somehow it seemed too unreal, almost dream-like. It couldn't have been as I remembered it to be.*

*I had been pushed into attending business school just as I had been pushed into almost anything connected with major consequences throughout my entire life by my father. I was his only son and envisioned by him as the heir apparent to his industrial empire. It made little difference whether or not I wanted it, in his eyes I was simply fulfilling my destiny. My pathetic attempts at rebellion had ended years before with a triumphant lecture delivered by my father as he paced up and down the floor of his study and announced his future intentions for my life. He proudly told me of the educational opportunities he had created for me and reminded me of my inherited responsibilities.*

*From that point on, it had been understood. I was to finish school, serve an apprenticeship for a number of years, and assume responsibility for the smooth and profitable direction of Morris International. My life would be dedicated to the perpetual expansion of my father's empire in order that I could carry on the tradition he had begun.*

*His vicarious pursuit of the American dream might have continued, had I not met Patricia. Looking back, I still wonder how she was able to recognize the presence of a writer beneath the obedient caricature of a man. It still amazes me that I was able to live that way contented simply with abiding by my father's wishes. Our mutual feelings changed that though. Her love for me was based on the potential that only she had been able to recognize. She taught me to recognize my hidden desire and helped me to develop my self-confidence. It was chiefly her loving guidance that enabled me to stand up to my father and embark upon my writing career.*

*Money had never been important to either one of us. Patricia had always been happy with my pursuit of the ideal novel and had never given me cause to doubt this. She seemed satisfied with me and had never before been critical of my literary attempts at understanding the hows and whys of people's lives. Her happiness was linked to my expansion and development as a writer. Although we shared a mutual goal, she had initially been forced to provide enough ambition to sustain both of us. As time passed, this changed.*

*Down through the years, I had attempted to understand human nature*

*by writing about it. Each of my three previous novels had been character studies which resulted from a combination of my thoughts, passions, and ideas and Patricia's determined guidance. I had been trying to understand people in general. I began to discover that I had failed simply because I did not completely understand myself. I had gradually come to realize that my skills were mine alone and that my creativity would only reach its peak if I allowed myself to experiment. My present novel would be ideal for this purpose because I would explore the limitations of my abilities and would finally understand myself by understanding where the effects of Patricia's influence ended and my inspiration and talent began.*

*Patricia's reaction to this proposal stunned me. She had never before rejected anything which would enable me to grow. She called me ungrateful and claimed that I was being selfish and insensitive. She saw my creation of a novel without her aid as a denial of my love for her. Although I tried to explain, she refused to listen. She could not understand why I refused to speak of my novel in anything but general terms.*

*For the first time in my life, I felt that I was moving forward solely through my own efforts. I had finally reached the point where I could rely upon myself. I had not been trying to exclude her, but simply wanted to prove something to myself. I needed to know that I could live and create through my writing without the safety and guidance of another. Patricia had thrived on my development and was aware of the transformation I had undergone. She of all people should have been able to understand how important this novel was to me. Instead, she attempted to prevent me from completing my work and tried to convince me that it was a waste of time.*

*After reflecting upon all of this, I've come to believe that Patricia was not actually in love with me, but what she could accomplish through me. Like my father, she looked upon me as a tool with which she could live out her dreams. Although I had been hurt by her leaving, I've come to realize that it was probably all for the better. Perhaps we'll both be happier apart.*

*ON LOSS*
*(Point of View III)*

*As she turned the yellowing pages of an ancient scrapbook, Mrs. Patricia Harris was reminded of the life she had known with her husband Frank. To the world he had been known as Franklyn James, the distinguished author who had specialized in the study of human relationships. His sudden death had triggered long buried feelings which she had believed to be forgotten.*

*For some unexplained reason, the news of his death had drawn her here, to the immense library which had once been her father's pride and joy. After searching the dusty shelves, she had come across the scrapbook. She*

*had almost forgotten that it existed. Yet she vividly remembered placing it upon the shelf years before after she and Frank had fought for the last time.*

*The aging pages were filled with a bizarre collection of sentiments composed mainly of photographs, poems, and love letters she had saved during the years they had shared. Gingerly turning a page, she was startled by a faded black and white photograph. Although it seemed impossible, it was one of she and Frank. It had been taken many years before shortly after they had met.*

*Her mind was flooded with a rush of uncontrollable nostalgia as she allowed her memory to drift back to the early days of their romance. She remembered the handsome young man whose shyness had been so attractive to her then. She remembered the frustration involved with her attempts to gain his attention. Most of all, she remembered the elation which she had felt after secretly stumbling across his assortment of notebooks filled with observations and visions of the people he had known.*

*It was this discovery which sealed her feelings of love which had slowly been developing. The notebooks revealed Frank Harris to be a loving, gentle man who cared deeply about people. His writing showed a remakable perception and clarity of vision which she had rarely seen before. Yet she knew talent when she saw it. Years of exposure to her father's works had caused her to develop a deeply rooted admiration for those who had been blessed with the ability to write.*

*The notebooks she had discovered while cleaning Frank's room in anticipation of his arrival revealed a great deal more. To Patricia, they presented a distinct cry for help. She had sensed the uncertainty and self-doubt which he pathetically tried to mask by creating grand images of the international industrial empire which he would someday guide. The content of the notebooks confirmed her suspicions.*

*In them, she saw the tortured soul of one who was torn between two worlds. She felt compelled to aid him in developing his obvious potential.*

*Patricia remembered the struggle she had undergone. After his initial fear, Frank had been gradually persuaded that writing was more important than he had been allowing himself to admit. As he came to accept what he would eventually regard as his destiny, Frank's love for her grew. With a constant supply of loving support, his confidence grew to the point where he could stand up to his father and openly declare his distaste for the business world.*

*Although their marriage was clouded by the deep rift that had developed between father and son, it was a happy one. As Patricia turned the pages, she recognized one review after another which overflowed with praise for Frank's novels. She remembered the love which had deepened between the two of them as they worked side by side on each of them.*

*The bond which had developed between the two of them was incredibly unique. They had reached the point where they almost understood each other's thoughts before they were spoken. Patrica looked upon Frank's novels as something beyond written words. They represented the culmination of a shared dream which had sustained itself and developed through their mutual love. Clearly, the novels were as much a part of her as they were of Frank, yet she had never attempted to claim any of the credit. Patricia remained content to simply aid Frank's development in any way possible, deriving the greatest satisfaction from the pleasure he felt as his abilities grew.*

*Patricia's warm reverie was coldly and abruptly interrupted by the sight of the final review. It concerned Frank's final novel, the one which had destroyed their happiness. She remembered clipping it out of the newspaper many years before and still could not understand why she had done so. It had seemed masochistic in a twisted sort of way. She had saved the review of the only novel which Frank could truly call his own. In it, he had received the most favorable notices of his entire career. Yet, she had not contributed to it in any way, and perhaps had hindered it by walking out on him.*

*The painful disbelief seemed as real and vivid as the first time he had told her of his so called "great experiment." The hurt she felt had not diminished even slightly with the passage of time. Even after all these years, she was left with a great deal of unanswered questions. Why had Frank cut her off so abruptly? What made him decide that he no longer needed her? What had she done to deserve this exclusion?*

*Patricia had never been so confused. Their shared dream was totally destroyed by Frank's unexpected coldness. She had truly believed that the writing was a mutually exclusive product. Its existence had provided an anchor of stability in her life. This had been taken away from her and selfishly monopolized by Frank. Her pain had been magnified by his incredible accusations. He had suddenly forgotten all that she had done for him and believed that she had been using him. All that she had ever asked of him was that he love her. They had shared ten years of joy and hardship and had built their lives around his work. Every aspect of her past ten years of life had been devoted to him.*

*After weeks of futile attempts at forcibly re-entering the world she had lost, Patricia decided that she could stay no longer. The irony of his physical nearness had completely disillusioned her. If she could not regain the most important part of her life, she would place as much distance as she could between Frank and herself. Although she had convinced herself that their separation would enable her to forget the intense pain which she now felt, deep down she had known that she was kidding herself.*

*The intense pain which she felt was compounded by the greatest loneliness she had ever experienced. Frank's development seemed to have peaked*

*without her. He had produced his finest novel alone and unaided. It had been a long number of years before she had been able to admit this to herself. This shocking realization was brutal and unyielding. Patricia had never known such happiness. Frank's novels filled her with more joy than she had ever thought possible. Although the work produced was as much hers as Frank's, Patricia remained content to simply aid his development in any way possible.*

*Well the problems are starting again; the same problems that I encountered last time. I just can't seem to write freely. Everything I put down on paper feels so forced and so foreign. I don't even feel the things that I am writing. I feel frustrated. I wish that everything I really want to say could be written down. But that's the hardest part of writing; getting down exactly what you think or feel.*

*I just read over what I had written. Forget it. I'm definitely starting again—a fresh start—new ideas.*

— entry 19 from the process journal of
Barbara Eisman

**DAY TWENTY**

I was finally getting that "play it by ear" teaching style. Everything seemed to be going well, and before I knew it the second point of view paper was due. A couple of students suggested we meet as one big group and read one or two pieces aloud so the class could hear what was happening in other groups. I thought it was a great idea.

One group suggested Barbara read her story. Her first point of view was about a Jewish man during the Nazi occupation. It was a fine piece with a number of haunting images. After some coaxing she acquiesced in reading the second point of view. As she read there was a certain cadence to her sentences and a definite rhythm to her writing. Through her writing Barbara had become a young German soldier unsure of what was happening in his beloved fatherland.

There was absolute silence after her reading. One scene where the soldier, seemingly unaware, led people to the showers absolutely stunned me. I broke the silence. I couldn't help but comment on the contrasting image of this supposed "good" man and the horrors of those showers. Others began to comment, praising Barbara's work. Then Terry innocently raised her hand and asked, "What is the Holocaust?" Barbara, obviously immersed in her topic, feeling its intensity, began to sob. Another student took her outside while I answered Terry's question.

I saw Barbara after class. We talked about Terry's comment and the probability of others in the class not knowing what the Holocaust was. Barbara felt good that her story could have allowed others to learn. This process "stuff" is powerful.

• • •

## *THE LINE OF DUTY*

*by Barbara Eisman*

*The barbed wire fence glistens from the morning's rain. The bright sun reflects off the metal, distorting my image on its shiny surface. The fence encloses a labor camp. That is all it really is: a labor camp. I do not understand why some people call it a death camp.*

*I just arrived here several hours ago. I came with many other German soldiers and commanders. I feel proud to be in their company. I envy those men who have been promoted to higher ranks—generals, lieutenants, and majors. I am just a soldier, but I have time to advance. I am only nineteen. I have my entire life ahead of me.*

*I have been here several days. "Frederick, it is time to supervise the field workers," my good friend Josef tells me when he enters my quarters. I follow him outside. The once drenched ground has dried up. The sun has disappeared behind dark, ominous clouds. Everything looks bleak and gray. I notice a group of old Jews lying on the muddy ground, eating bread. They look worn and pale. I shudder as my eyes glance down their emaciated bodies. Only a paper-thin covering of flesh stretches over their bones. As Josef and I pass by them, Josef kicks one of the old men in the stomach with the sharp heel of his army boot. "Get up you dirty Jew," he shouts. The Jew feebly rises to his feet, as we continue on our way. "Next time," Josef says, "kick them around.- We must show them who is in charge." Josef's words fall harshly on my ears. Am I a coward? Is cruelty bravery? Is humanity cowardice? "Yes Josef," I answer with a nervous laugh.*

*We walk further until we come upon the field workers whom I am to supervise. Several commanders are already there. They shout, "Work faster dirty Jews."*

*"You are all lazy pigs."*

*"Keep it moving. Keep it moving."*

*I go to my station. I notice a woman who has stopped working. "What is going on here?" a Nazi general shouts. "Continue working immediately!" Her feeble voice cries, "I can't. I can't. I can't go on anymore. I have no strength. Let me die. Please let me die. Let me . . ." Her voice is cut off by the general's order: "Take her away. Bring her to the showers. She could use a good scrubbing." Several workers start to cry. "Not the showers. Not the showers," they plead. The woman who has spoken out looks dazed as two soldiers lead her to the showers. "Silence! Everyone get back to work," the general commands.*

*I had heard about the showers. Is it really true, I wonder? Josef appears at my side. "She will get a good scrubbing all right—with gas," he laughs, as if he has made a joke.*

*Am I a freak? Am I weak? My parents had been gentle people; they had taught me to love, not to hate. They had also taught me to love my country, to be patriotic. But in these times, how can one do both? If loving one's country meant hating other people, how can I love my country? Or am I supposed to hate another people?*

*I am jolted out of my thoughts by my commander's orders. "Frederick, bring these Jews to the showers." I look to where he points. A group of women and children stand there silently. Waiting. "Did you hear me Frederick?"*

*"Ja, Herr Schmidt."*

*What are they feeling inside? Fear? Apathy? Relief? Betrayal? What would I be feeling on my way to my death?*

*"Keep it moving," I yell at them, as we approach the showers. They follow me like docile puppies. Moving one foot in front of the other—mechanically. Automatically. Their faces look frenzied and strangely serene at the same time. "Line up here," I command them. "Women first, children last," I say. They take their places. Ready for the senseless slaughter. "Clothes off," I shout, as they start to strip the rags off their atrophic bodies. "File in," I hear myself say in a voice that is not my own. My voice sounds strange. That is not me talking. Who is it then? Someone else?*

*They go in one by one. Their silent cries are audible. They shed dry tears. I cry inside as I bolt the heavy steel door behind the last little boy. Josef comes up to me laughing. "Hey Frederick," he jokes, "do you want to take a shower? Using soap and water of course!" I turn my back on him, and walk away.*

*I awake to the sound of pouring rain. I have been a good soldier. I have obeyed my orders. I have performed my duties. I look out the window. All the ditches are filled with water. What a shame. Now they have to dig new graves. On mornings like these I do not feel like getting out of bed. But duty calls. Duty comes before all things. Duty is paramount.*

*Josef is not here anymore. He has been promoted to lieutenant, and he has gone to another Death Camp. I perform his job now, every day at 9:00 A.M. I feel honored to have been chosen to take over his duties.*

*General Kafka appears at my door. "It is time Herr Frederick," he says. I follow him outside, holding my rifle securely. They are already lined up. The men still have their skullcaps on their heads. I take my place in front of them. I place my gun on my shoulder. I put my finger on the trigger. I am doing this for my country. I love my country. We are the Master Race.*

*We are supreme. We must eliminate all those who are beneath us.*

*"Frederick, Frederick," I hear my mother say. "What Mutter?" I reply, annoyed to have been interrupted from playing jacks with my friend. "Sarah's mother has just told me that you said wicked things to Sarah about her being a Jew. Is that true Frederick?" my mother angrily scolds. "Nein Mutter. I did not mean it" I whine. "Go over to her house now to apologize!" my mother demands. "Do not ever again make fun of someone for being different from you. All people are the same. Do you understand me?" "Ja Mutter" I answer.*

*I survey the bodies before me. "Get down on the ground", I shout to them. They do as I command. "Hands on your heads", I yell. They do as I command.*

*"Vater", I ask my father, "Why do my friends say 'Dirty Jude' all the time?" "They do not know any better, Frederick", my father replies. "I do not want to catch you imitating them!" "Ja Vater", I say.*

*My finger rests firmly on the trigger.*

*Mind your mother. Mind your father.*

*The fleshy tip of my finger is frozen in its place.*

*"All people are the same."*

*"Do not ever again make fun of someone for being different from you."*

*The rain pounds the ground. My boots are caked with mud. My hair is plastered to my head.*

*"They do not know any better, Frederick."*

*The rain is coming down harder and harder.*

*"Dirty Jude. Dirty Jude."*

*"I do not want to catch you imitating them."*

*"Dirty Jude. Dirty Jude."*

*Position. Aim. Fire.*

*I find myself repeating a lot of things. The way I'm going about this is. I'm writing down anything that pops into my head and then I will organize the whole paper. It's a challenging paper. I'm finding out a lot of things that I was even afraid to talk about to anybody. I'm trying my best not to make it too personal.*

— from the process journal of
Anne Hyman

*Writing the second point of view was harder even though it was from my own "eyes." Why?*

— from the process journal of
Michael Minor

**DAY TWENTY-FOUR**

It was a lesson we had done twice before, once when we had completed the first point of view paper and later while we were writing the second point of view. Each of us would read aloud a section of our process journal. The entry could be related to the story we were writing presently or it could be something meaningful for some other reason. We had learned while exploring our own writing. Although the entire class was not privy to all the stories being written, the process, like the person reading it, had a life of its own. Sometimes we made comments but often the entry was simply read. It was that strong. The following pieces reflect that strength.

*At first the writing was hard. All the hurt associated with the experience was on my mind and made it difficult for me to think straight. As I started to write, it was as if a faucet had been turned on slowly at first but then it was turned on fully and the writing became easier. As I wrote I remembered many little things that I had blocked out of my mind not wanting to think about them. In fact, I had tried to block the whole thing out of my mind—pretend it didn't happen. Then I started thinking about my story all the time but as I started writing it, I felt totally different about the people involved. I didn't hate them. I just felt detached. I lost a part of myself while writing. It was the hatred I felt. I don't miss it.*

— from the process journal of
Denise Shortt

*I wrote today in dialogue. I find it easy to write down a conversation. I enjoy giving hints about the character by the lines he says. It's a slow process but in the end I think you know the characters better than you would if you were just describing the character.*

— from the process journal of
Lee Zwolinski

*Anyway as I was just writing I just realized how I always am saying I only work well under pressure—given goals but there are no real pressures in this class just goals and you set them yourself. Goals and pressure are two different things. This may be a confusing entry but it worked out a thing or two in my head.*

— from the process journal of
Jill Eisenstadt

*I'm finished! I'm finished! Wow, what a relief. I'm so glad that I finished it before handing it in. I never handed in a story without an ending and I don't think I ever could. It would bother me too much.*

*This is so strange—but I actually had no idea of how I was going to end my story until I found myself writing the ending. I'm telling you that is the first time that happened to me. It was so exciting! Do you know what I mean. I just wrote and wrote and wrote. It just happened! It's exciting! I don't ever know if anyone else could understand what I'm trying to do.*

— from the process journal of
Barbara Eisman

*Dear Ms. Rossi,*

*This cycle went really fast but I enjoyed it very much. I'm not trying to butter you up, I just want to say goodbye and thanks. I probably won't have you next cycle and then I graduate. I'm writing this because in 10th grade, I had you for Interpersonal Communication and you wrote me a letter at the end of my journal. Ever since I have wanted to write back. I know my process journal had other things in it besides my process. I didn't want to prolong it by putting that stuff in there it's just I felt my personal feelings were safe with you.*

— from the process journal of
Carolyn Rawdon

* * *

## FROM THE WORKS OF
## DEBBIE MULLER

### Point of View III:
### *ELEANOR IN THE TOWER SPEAKING TO DEATH*

*Hello; I've been awaiting your arrival.*
*You haven't much to transport home. The*
*vultures have beaten you to most of my soul.*
*Fear not though, there's still much left.*
*Don't look so surprised. I'm no Merlin but*
*I've known for some time that this was yet to*
*come. In fact you've taken quite a long time.*
*In some ways I deserve this for there*
*were so many who have resented me. How*
*could they have helped it? Yes, I heard their*
*whispers even though I was their Queen.*
*I was much too smart, much too outspoken.*
*Peasants how dare they judge me. Wait...*
*Someday, in future, futures they will*
*say "she was ahead of the times." But they will*
*be wrong. Only you and I will know the*
*truth. You see I'm a whisper of what's*
*ahead, a thread just beginning to unravel.*
*Stop smiling; you remind me of...*
*Step back! I'm not ready to leave! Not just yet...*
*Being the wife of Louis was like being*
*married to a priest; with Henry it was*
*like being married to a jobbing Jupiter.*
*Only I was never the woman behind the*
*man. We stood side to side.*
*I took Aquataine from Louis*
*and from Henry his son's love.*
*Right now Henry is paying for his mistakes*
*He tried so desperately to dictate the future,*
*which is your job. I ruined that. He brought it*
*on himself. I wonder if Becket is waiting to meet me.*
*Yes, he has failed.*
*But I love him.*

*That's a great failing. For love weakens it doesn't strengthen.*

*Yes I know time is flickering out. It's cold in here. I'm scared, me Eleanor of Aqua... Aquataine*

*See I told you it weakens but wait I remember...*

*He took me as he would take the salt he spilled. And he threw me over his shoulder to improve his luck.*

*He tried to take Aquataine, but Richard shall repay him...*

*but it isn't working. And I see it's time to go.*

*He never could coordinate the two worlds.*

*I've been hearing "process" everywhere. My flute teacher discusses process in music. The way a piece can be technically correct and then still have miles to go in the process. . . . This book I'm reading Water in the Lake discusses process in both music and writing. Everything is coming up "process." If it hadn't been for this process class I would have completely stopped writing. The chairman of the English department who was my teacher last year always made critical comments about my work. He made it seem worthless and incredibly dull. Of course, my writing does need work and shape but he neither gave ways of cultivating it nor encouragement. He just crossed out a lot of my words. It was like someone crossing out my feelings. . . .*

— from the process journal of
Jill Eisenstadt

**DAY-THIRTY THREE**

It was the day before the last day of the cycle. I was returning process journals and the last point of view assignments. On the last page of each process journal I wrote a personal note. Until I had read Carolyn's process journal I had not realized how much a note could mean years later. A few of the notes were as follows:

*Dear Jill,*

*You are growing in so many ways and that you can express yourself in writing, in music, and in art is so special. Your story/stories were a pleasure and your process was really on its way before this class.*

*Are you sure you don't want to write for the literary magazine? Just tell the chairman not to touch your work with a red pencil. As for writing in college—the first two years can be an introduction to different areas. Don't rule out writing but recognize the job market.*

*All of these sentences and my comments to your questions do not reflect accurately how fine your journal is. It's very late and although I read your journal Friday afternoon, it's now Sunaay evening. I thought I could think of something clever.*

*Nothing clever,*
*Lillian*

*Dear Mary,*

*Who are you going to pick on next cycle when you don't have me to kick around? Only kidding. I enjoyed your process journal and your ever-present arguments day in and day out about your inability to write. Guess what, I was right, you can write.*

*Lillian*

*Dear Barbara,*

*Pretty greedy of me to pick a clean page. Your work this cycle has been so impressive. I cannot tell you how moving your story/stories were, although I have tried. You write beautifully.*

*Your process journal shows much reflection and turmoil about your story. As I stated earlier, even the lines of your story showed me how much internalization you went through.*

*Lillian*

* * *

## FROM THE WORKS OF JILL EISENSTADT

### *GUESTS*

*Footing its way through the winter reeds.*
*The sandpiper leaves his grand disruption.*

*Brisk stacatto tracks—*
*Morse code of*
*stage stuttering*
*far-off sputtering*
*hesitant utterings*

*the gray spaces*
*the frown of cordgrass*
*the ripe stillness*

*Misplaced punctuation*
*stabbing snow*
*in exclamations*

*on the crystal quilt*
*the drift dunes*
*fresh frost.*

*Reeds writhe from impolite company*
*the stink of severed seagull*
*the hail invasion*
*the rude sandpiper*
*hopping into the cold sky...*

JILL EISENSTADT

# Cold Birds

Backstroking in your well-lit pool
head raising
  fat phrasing
    chlorinated drool
Verbose shadows shiver
thun frizzle and fry
breath of deflating rafts
lost in sunburnt July

I climb out of August
curls astray, slippery feet
falling down on
your promise to make me complete
And the fractured purity
Youth's old defeat
fair skin far too exposed
irreversible heat

Collapsed
in air-conditioned pillows
sorting habit
in naked down
  in fever dreams
    in broken pictures
landscapes
we've been pasted on

And unlike surrendering bodies
in first love
this innocence bled
on the sheets that you spoke of
The well-dressed persuasion
all seasonable muddle
and September like dry leaves
so crisp in wet puddles

Virgin chill
and cold birds flutter
handshake breaking
  neighbor raking
    summer in the gutter
The fall was mostly clamor
more fright they said than wounds
Now holding on
tight like a child
with helium balloons

Published in *Soundings*, Spring, 1981,
(School literary magazine)
Stanley Barkan, editor

*At first, I didn't think I'd find much to write about this coin, a quarter. I found when you looked closely there were a lot of interesting things to say. I guess I never really looked at a coin before. It's really strange. I wonder how many other things I haven't really looked at.*

— from the process journal of
Deidre Lynch

*This is why I started to write. . . . I had to seek out the truth and unravel the snarled web of motivation. I had to find out who I am and what I want to be. . . .*

— *Soul on Ice*
Eldridge Cleaver

*A new attention to the composing process may not be a panacea. But there may be much to gain from teaching that directly addresses each student's experience with composing. For example, some students may approach the act of writing with greater ease when they realize that planning actually does occur while they are writing and, therefore, they do not need to know "everything" they're going to write before they begin. Others may benefit from knowing that a new idea discovered during writing may result in the reworking of a laboriously constructed beginning. With this awareness, they may even postpone concern for introductions and titles until they have neared the end of their writing, that is until they have truly discovered what they have to say. And students may benefit most by taking the responsibility of composing into their own hands. They may call upon editing rules and teachers' comments as a way to help them say what they mean more clearly. But when they recognize that what they want to communicate is something only they can construct, they will realize the power of composing.*

— "Unskilled Writers as Composers"
Sondra Perl
*N.Y.U. Education Quarterly*

**DAY THIRTY-FOUR**

In the end, I wanted to measure the class and prove its worth to my colleagues and to the administrators, but what we as a class had done together could only be measured by the quantity and quality of the experience for each of us. Yet, the amount of work submitted by the class impressed me, as did their insights, their ability to be vulnerable

and funny with each other and with me. The last day of the cycle is usually reflective, but our reflectiveness was a built-in thing.

They came in and I suppose they expected we would talk. I felt sad to lose them but I didn't tell them. Instead I told them to take a coin out of their pockets and write about it for twenty minutes. It was an assignment I had read about in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. They wrote and we read our papers aloud. Then the bell rang. We ended a class in writing by writing.

**AFTERNOTE**

The class has been offered five times since 1979, and three hundred and eighty-five more students have elected to be in it. Perhaps that is a measurement of sorts. Yesterday, one of my present process classes was writing. My principal walked in, but when he saw us writing he stepped out of the room backwards into the hall. He motioned for me to come out and speak with him. I put down my pencil. He wanted to know if I was going to do any teaching or would the class be writing all period. I told him he was welcome anytime, especially now. He could join us and write. He laughed and said he would prefer to come in when I was really teaching. All I could say was that I was really teaching. I was teaching writing.

# Appendix A

## A WATER COLOR

by Lillian Rossi

My mother's kitchen is large and orderly. There is a small alcove leading to the front door and there are two delicate ivy plants on each side. The cabinets are natural wood; the walls are painted white. There is one picture on the wall. It is a print of a Monet watercolor. The picture is of a bridge; the water surrounding it is of a purplish hue. The print was a gift from me. There was no special reason for giving it to her. I just wanted her to have it. I was surprised that she had it framed and more surprised to find it on the wall. Growing up all gifts were saved but none were made public. I look at the kitchen now on this visit and realize many of my memories are built around it and its contradictions. Every shelf is filled but there is a definite logic to where things are placed. Although there is much counter space, the only appliances that are seen are a toaster and an electric can opener. The other appliances and cookware can be found easily but as soon as anything is used, it is soaked, scrubbed and put away. When I think of the contrast between this kitchen and my own, I smile. Like hers, the plants I grow are lush except mine go untrimmed. They fall over the sides of their pots tangled; many of them obscure appliances. One of my favorites which sits on the edge of the kitchen window has grown into the sink. I cannot bear to cut it; so when I wash dishes I gently take the vines and place them on top of the pot. I am beginning to understand this jungle has become a metaphor for my life. I do not know exactly how it works but it's something that I have consciously and subconsciously courted.

My mother is washing dishes now. I watch her hands dip into the soapy water and remember once when my own hands were filled with soap and I was in the process of letting the tangled vines hang again. I had this flash of my sister taking some pins out of her hair so she could wash her hair for a date. I watched as she put each pin on the side of the sink. I see very clearly, although time blurs and memory perhaps embellishes, her arm curve and her body tilt toward the sink. This image, this memory within a memory breaks off. Its link to the past

flickers. I am sitting in the same kitchen but that moment is gone.

Soon my mother, too, will stop her silent conversation. We'll talk about a hundred other things. The little things our lives have come to mean. There is a bond between us, sometimes shared but more often unspoken. I have come to a point in my life where I would like to hear the words, yet I realize I am partially to blame for not hearing them. I watch my mother still at the sink. I think of her unspoken words. I recall the words from the Eliot poem, "What are the roots that clutch?" Out of something within me, I jump up to dry the dishes that I myself would have left to drain. As I am putting away some spoons I see behind the utensil holder a clipped photograph, in black and white. It is held in a plastic frame. In the picture, my sister is sitting up in a hospital bed in her hospital gown. You cannot see the bed, but I know the picture. She is frozen within it, a half sad smile, her eyes half averting from the camera. I remember the day the picture was taken. I sat, perhaps, two feet away from her and out of the range of the camera's eye. I became another eye except now only with the recollection of this picture can I recall the other picture stored somewhere in my consciousness. She was pale, her face seemed gaunt, the cheekbones were more prominent with hollows underneath. There was a stillness about her mostly within her eyes. During that visit she didn't talk. I see and hear through this mind's eye and ear. I was to graduate college that month. I was twenty, sun-burned and looking for a job. That morning I had been hired by Finnish Airlines. Poignantly my sister asked if I was going to visit her the next day and since I would not be in Manhattan, I assured her that I would. It is with longing for what was not that I realize I did not go back.

What is there within us that cannot see the truth when it stares at us with a face so racked with pain? Why can I remember her fingers like pale church candles? The recurring image of how as a child I watched such candles flickering out on a high altar. The sense I had in that room and carried within me as I sat in a Manhattan train which seemed with its rumblings and rhythms to echo her name. Is it true when things get too close, there are some who simply flee!

In the hospital room my sister asked if I remember the feathers. I look at her with surprise. One summer when she had been married about five years and I was about to leave home for college, she, her daughter Patty, and I plucked down feathers from old pillows. It was our summer business venture. I say our, but it was really my sister's. She was a fledgling antique dealer in the small town we had lived in all our lives. She had heard there was a market for down feathers in the City. An old woman had given her twenty pillows and we were ripping them

and stuffing the feathers into plastic bags. There was something ridiculous about doing such a thing. I said so. She laughed and said I had no magic within me. Half in anger, half in jest, I threw feathers at her and she threw them back at me. There were feathers everywhere. My sister called herself the "feather queen"; she called me the "feather princess," while she dubbed her small daughter as our lady in waiting. We were a strange parade working into the night in our father's half-lit garage. Looking at us was like seeing a trick mirror. For given the various sizes and differences of age, we had the same face.

When we finished for the evening I felt a strange glowing feeling. That night I could not go to sleep and so I walked across the road to a large open field. The sky was blue with streaks of red and pink. The weeds were cut, but prickly on my back. There was something, and perhaps these words are tied up in my mind, good and clean about this place. Often, in the day, I sat there. As a child, I thought, the weeds were a field of wheat. At night, there was a quiet and beauty I had never known—I know, in short, I felt very happy. For the rest of the summer, which passed quickly, I was called the "feather princess" although the venture turned, as expected, ridiculous. The feathers were not all down, and for the fifteen pounds we extracted, I believe our profit was fourteen dollars.

Four summers later in a hospital where nurses lingered in grey halls, I waited for magic. But when I was reminded of it I recoiled from mentioning it. And with the foolishness of those who think that they and those they love are invincible, I brushed my face against my sister's to say goodbye. A week later she was dead.

The present unfolds as the sun sets through my mother's kitchen window. My brother's baby cut a tooth; his wife is pregnant again. My father talks about retiring but my mother knows he never will. The summer days seem to melt one into another. They have a sameness to them that she feels routinized. As I listen to her talk, I look at the Monet picture. Water under the bridge, in this sense, will always be under the bridge. My mother smiles. It is more in her eyes than with her face. I look long and hard at this kitchen as if to memorize all of it. But that is impossible. It is not my kitchen. I do not know all that it holds. As I leave she holds me longer in an embrace. I feel tears well up inside, yet I simply brush my face against hers to say goodbye.

# Appendix B

## DEVELOPING A VOCABULARY OF RESPONSE STEPS FOR MEMBERS OF A WRITING GROUP

Workshop Prepared
by
Sondra Perl

**Norms for the Group.**

Reading a piece of writing to one's peers is always scary and exciting. It often helps if everyone in the group is aware of the following points:

1. The moment after someone finishes reading is the most difficult. No one is sure what ought to be responded to first. Knowing what to respond to takes time. Allow for this time by agreeing to thirty seconds or a minute of silence before anyone responds. This will provide all group members with an opportunity to collect their thoughts.

2. Some people find it easier to respond than others. The group can easily develop a dynamic in which the same people respond and others remain silent. Agree ahead of time that everyone will respond once to the entire piece and to the experience of having it read before more particular responses are developed.

**Specific Steps for Responding**

1. Practice skills for active listening. Make sure you understand what the writer is trying to communicate by restating what has been written, either by paraphrasing, summarizing the gist of what has been read, or using most of the author's own words.

   This is a crucial point. Writers need most to know what has been communicated before they can benefit from your reactions or judgments. Sometimes writers may not be sure what they wanted to communicate until you say it back to them. Allow time for writers to hear their own words and allow time for writers to change or develop them.

2. Respond to the piece of writing you have just heard. As the piece is being read, underline the words or phrases that catch your attention. Think before you respond. What about those words makes them stand out? Why those specific words? What parts do you like best about the piece? What do those parts do to you? This allows you to say what works about the piece. Letting writers know what is effective about their writing is as important if not more important than telling them what doesn't work. Be sure to respond to specific sections of the writing. A general response like "I like it," or "That was good," is just the beginning.

3. Ask the writer what he/she intended to do in the writing. Ask which parts the writer likes best. Which parts does he/she want help on? Help the writer clarify where the piece needs to go. Rewriting? Revising? Are there bits or images in the writing that could be the germ of another piece?

4. Let the writer know if there are any parts that don't work for you. Is there anything that seems confusing, out of place, unclear? Are there any errors that stand out glaringly to you? Explain why you are bothered by that particular item. Let the writer know if he/she reads (pronounces) words or word endings that are not on the page. Help the writer spot what is missing.

Remember that step 4 is one step in the process, not the only one.

# Resources


Bernhardt, Bill. *Just Writing.* New York: Teachers and Writers, 1977.

Bernhardt's beginning section on process in writing was helpful in articulating what I had learned through my own process.

Britton, James, *et al. The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18).* London: Macmillan, 1975. Distributed in paperback by NCTE.

Burgess, Tony, ed. *Understanding Children Writing.* Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1973.

Calkins, Lucy McCormick. "Andrea Learns to Make Writing Hard." *Language Arts,* 56 (May, 1979), pp. 569-76.

_____. "Children Learn the Writer's Craft." *Language Arts,* 57 (February, 1980), pp. 207-13.

Coles, William. *The Plural I.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978.

Cooper, Charles, and Odell, Lee, eds., *Research on Composing.* Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1978.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing Without Teachers.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Elbow's book helped me by reminding me that "Writing is a transaction with yourself—lonely and frustrating. . . . But writing is also a transaction with other people."

Emig, Janet A. *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders.* Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1971. (Research Report No. 13)

Emig's book centers on eight twelfth graders and their modes of composing—reflexive and extensive. Although the beginning of the book reviews how certain famous writers kept track of their processes, the students' processes, especially Lynn's, are interesting. What's important also is Emig's insights into teaching and her suggestion that teachers move from the unimodal type of discourse for students.

Graves, D.H. "Balance the Basics: Let Them Write." *Learning,* April 1978, pp. 30-33.

Hawkins, Thom. *Group Inquiry Techniques in Teaching Writing.* Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1976.

Haynes, Elizabeth F. "Using Research in Preparing to Teach Writing." *English Journal,* 67 (January 1978), pp. 82-88.

Healy, Mary K. *Using Student Writing Response Groups in the Classroom.* Berkeley: Bay Area Writing Project, 1979.

Macrorie, Ken. *Uptaught.* Rochelle Park, New Jersey: Hayden Book Co., 1979.

Martin, Nancy, *et al. Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum, 11-16.* London: Ward Lock Educational, 1976.

Although I read this book after I introduced the process class in my school, this work helps to remind me that the environment or climate of a class is key for learning to take place. The view of how a teacher can help a student without imposing a structure on that student's thinking and the commitment to children's intentions are powerful.

McQuade, Donald, ed. *Linguistics, Stylistics, and the Teaching of Composition.* Akron, Ohio: L&S Books, 1979.

Moffett, James. *Teaching the Universe of Discourse.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968.

_____ and Wagner, Betty Jane. *Student Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-13.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976.

Murray, Donald. *A Writer Teaches Writing.* New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1968.

This book reinforced the idea that the best teachers of writing are writers.

Perl, Sondra. "A Look at Basic Writers in the Process of Composing." *Basic Writing: Essays for Teachers, Researchers, Administrators.* L. Kasden and D. Hoeber, eds., Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1980, pp. 13-32.

I have been extremely lucky in learning from Sondra Perl. Her impact on students, teachers, and colleagues is tremendous. She is able to share and articulate her vision concerning teaching.

In this essay, Perl recommends that teachers spend more time observing students write while making sure students understand the internal and external pressures that affect writing. Perl also details the crucial operations involved in composing.

_____. "The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers." *Research in the Teaching of English,* 13 (December, 1979), pp. 317-36.

_____. "Unskilled Writers as Composers." *New York University Education Quarterly,* 110 (Spring, 1979), pp. 17-27.

Pirsig, Robert. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.* New York: Bantam Books, 1974.

It's hard to explain specifically how important this book was for me. I just felt stronger watching the narrator learn.

Porter, Katherine Anne. "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall." *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965. Also found in *Flowering Judas and Other Stories.*

Shaughnessy, Mina. *Errors and Expectations.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Sowers, Susan. "KDS CN RIT SUNR THN WE THINGK." *Learning,* October, 1980, pp. 14+.

_____. "A Six-Year-Old's Writing Process: The First Half of First Grade," *Language Arts.* 56 (October, 1979), pp. 829-35.

## The Author

Lillian Rossi is from Brooklyn New York. She has been teaching English and speech for ten years. For the past two years, she has also trained other teachers in the composing process. Last summer she team-taught a graduate course with Sondra Perl at Lehman College, CUNY. Currently, Lillian is on sabbatical visiting various writing projects and searching for the perfect wave.